

Rising to the Food Security Challenge: An Investigation into Family Farm Succession in the South West of England

Volume 1 of 1

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Rising to the Food Security Challenge: An Investigation into Family Farm Succession in the South West of England

Volume 1 of 1

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Abstract

Driven by global population growth and anticipated increases in demand for food as well as a number of other goods and services, the issue of food security has recently (re-)emerged in both policy and academic contexts. Using a modified political economy perspective, this study recognises the role of the family farm as policy operatives in this context and considers the potential influence of intergenerational farm transfer on the delivery of food security objectives. It also explores how the food security agenda, described by some as the *renaissance in agriculture*, is influencing the farming community and in particular, the appeal of succeeding to the family farm. Broadly, it seeks to add to, and develop the body of knowledge relating to family farm succession, and explores the linkages between succession and the food security agenda.

The study used 1941-1943 National Farm Survey data and maps as a tool to facilitate semi-structured interviews with farmers, and where applicable their potential successors, in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, Devon, UK. The study also highlights the absence of the potential successor from family farm research and subsequently resolves definitional issues surrounding the term by presenting a conceptual framework, including a definition of the potential successor.

The findings indicate that family farming continues to be largely hereditary, and demonstrates how the occupancy of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes has been shaped by traditions and expectations that socialised incumbent farmers into succeeding. Despite contemporary concern about the desirability of intergenerational farm transfer, participating farmers understood passing on the farm to a next generation as desirable. Many of whom framed their optimism in the context of the food security agenda and the anticipated opportunities for the industry.

Drawing on in-depth interviews, this thesis questions the notion of the so called 'succession crisis', and identifies a number of positive adaptations and outcomes associated with successor identification which it discusses in the context of delivery of food security objectives. Two broad types of transfer of managerial control were identified and a typology is offered that suggests types of transfer are the product of potential successors' ages and the subsequent nature of their upbringing. The thesis critically considers the types' respective merits in the context of food security objectives and an original conceptualisation is offered as a contemporary way of understanding the types of transfer of managerial control in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

As well as influencing the transfer of managerial control, the study attributes significant differences in potential successors' motivations according to the fundamental societal shift from a 'society of duty' to a 'market place of opportunity'. Critically, the thesis revealed how, unlike their older counterparts, younger potential successors were motivated by the *renaissance in agriculture*, particularly elements such as the renewed public interest in, and respect for, farming as well as, opportunities farming for food security may offer.

Overall, the thesis highlights the importance of considering the family farm and the influence of succession on the industry's response to food security policy measures. It proposes that, at an aggregate level, 'effective succession', measured in terms of the identification of a successor *and* the timely and appropriate transfer of managerial control, are likely to be key factors in the delivery of food security objectives. It also recognises how succession and successor 'creation' are changing as society increasingly prioritises the individual and that the changing image of farming associated with the *renaissance in agriculture* is influencing younger potential successors. From these conclusions, suggestions are made for areas of further work, particularly with regard to understanding the implications of the different types of transfer of managerial control on long-term farm business performance, and some practical options for continuing to attract potential successors into the industry and facilitating effective intergenerational transfer are offered.

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List of Acronyms

ADAS	UK environmental consultancy company
ARAC	Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CWAECs	County War Agricultural Executive Committees
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DIY-biography	‘Do It Yourself’ biography
DOB	Date of Birth
EFRA	Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
FADN	Farm Accountancy Data Network
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation (of the United Nations)
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GCS	Geographic Co-ordinate System
GIS	Geographic Information System
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IGD	Research and training charity – food and consumer goods industry
JPEG	Type of digital image – created by the Joint Photographic Experts Group
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries (1919-1955)
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1955-2001)
NFS	The (1941-1943) National Farm Survey
NFU	National Farmers’ Union
NIC	Newly Industrialised Countries
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPM	Operating Profit Margin
OS	Ordnance Survey
PDM	Principal Decision Maker
QSR	Software developer – creator of NVivo qualitative analysis software
ROE	Return on Equity
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals
TFA	Total Farm Assets
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
YFC	Young Farmers Club

Inclusion of Previously Published Papers

Please note Section 4.3 is closely based on and draws directly on the author's previous publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (2014) 'The Importance of Next Generation Farmers: A Conceptual Framework to Bring the Potential Successor into Focus', *Geography Compass*, 8 (5): 300-312. This article is included in Appendix 15.

Please also note, Section 5.3 is closely based on and draws directly on the author's previous publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (in press) 'The value of the 1941-1943 National Farm Survey as a method for engagement with farmers in contemporary research', *Area*, n/a: n/a. This article is included in Appendix 16.

References to these papers are indicated in the relevant sections of the text.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introducing the Food Security Challenge

“Without significant innovation and adaptation in capacities to produce, distribute and exchange food, humanity faces a bleak and divided future in rising to emerging demographic trends and patterns of economic development” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 41)

The issue of food security has (re-)emerged in both policy and academic contexts in recent years (Fish *et al*, 2013; Candel *et al*, 2014). In its most basic sense, food security is understood to exist “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). Following three decades in which the overriding policy discourse in much of the developed world had been one of land surplus, in which issues such as set-aside and extensification dominated, and concern over food security was largely absent, the emphasis has recently and dramatically changed, and food security has (re-)emerged at the forefront of domestic policy in the UK, in a way not seen since the 1950s (Lobley and Winter, 2009). Food security has re-emerged as a global concern; a multifaceted challenge of meeting the demands of continuing population and consumption growth and increasing competition for water, land and energy, set against the urgent need to reduce the impact of food production on the environment. Before exploring food security in its all-encompassing and contemporary sense, it is necessary to outline the origins and subsequent evolution of the term.

1.0.1 Food Security: Evolution of the Term

It is important to note that as a term, food security has undergone significant transformations during its conceptual lifetime (Carr, 2006). It was during the 1974 World Food Summit that a single definition of food security emerged, understood as “*availability* at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN, 1975). This definition remained until 1983 when the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) incorporated physical and economic *access* to food into the definition:

“ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” (FAO, 1983)

Maxwell (1996) attributes this change in understanding to Sen’s (1981) recognition that hunger existed alongside food availability. Using the example of the Bengal Famine of 1943, Sen (1981) demonstrated despite food being *available* from supply, stock and production at the time, peoples’

access to food was limited, through a lack of buying power, excessive pricing and lack of community sharing or transfer. Sen's (1981) conclusions thrust the issue of access to the centre of the concept of the food security debate and encouraged a shift from the macro to the micro level; from global availability, to individual accessibility.

A subsequent definition offered by the World Bank drew out the temporal dimension of the term, distinguishing between chronic food insecurity, and transitory insecurity as a result of natural disasters or political conflict. Specifically, food security was understood to mean "access of all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life" (World Bank, 1986), a significant shift from earlier definitions that focused on the mere requirement of enough food for survival.

By the 1990s the term spanned a spectrum from global, down to the individual, encompassing concerns such as socially or cultural determined food preferences, food safety, nutritional value and so on. By way of a response to this plethora of considerations, the 1996 World Food Summit offered a further and more inclusive definition, which focused on entitlement at the individual level:

"when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 1996)

Additionally, for Tweeten (1999), food security definitions up until this point were missing a vital component in the form of the utilisation of food. Tweeten (1999) states that utilisation, referring to the metabolism of food, is an essential facet in achieving food security, and notes that regardless of the amount of food available, food still needs to be utilised correctly for it to be of any worth. Although validly stipulating the importance of utilisation to achieving food security, Renzaho and Mellor (2009) are critical for Tweeten for merely referring to 'biological utilization'. Using the United States Agency for International Development (1992: 4) definition of "[when] food is properly used; proper food processing and storage techniques are employed, adequate knowledge of nutrition and child care techniques exist and are applied, and adequate health and sanitation services exist". Renzaho and Mellor (2009) demonstrate how utilization is not merely concerned with biological utilisation but critically, the physical utilisation of food. Physical utilisation of food refers to the ability of a household or individual, to have the physical ability to utilise the food available to them, including access to cooking utensils, knowledge of how to store, prepare or cook food and even the time available to cook it.

Unsurprisingly given the number of definitions and successive clarifications, by 1999, Hoddinott (1999) inventoried over 200 definitions of food security, demonstrating its complex nature and reflecting the numerous attempts at defining the term in both research and policy arenas. Maxwell

(1996: 155) offers an analogy to denote the evolution of the term food security, describing it as a “pool of genetic material, left quietly in a corner of the rain forest [...] one minute, we find a single, simple life form; the next, the forest floor is crawling with different species and the air is bright with the flash of multi-coloured wings”.

Since Maxwell’s description, the term has further transformed. The confluence of new set of intersecting challenges, associated with recognition of the need to meet rapidly changing demands for food from a larger and more affluent population, in ways that are *sustainable* (Godfray *et al*, 2010) has both reignited and broadened the term. To this end, whilst the term is based on original ideas of the availability and accessibility, it now denotes a profusion of ideas and challenges that provide the context to this research. In its contemporary sense, food security is best summarised by the Global Food Security Group.

“The world faces a potentially even greater crisis in food security as the global population is expected to grow from about 6.9 billion to more than 9 billion by mid-century. The FAO has predicted that demand for food will grow by 50% by 2030 and 70% by 2050 [...] therefore the challenge is to meet the rising demand for food in ways that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and in the face of evolving world-wide markets and distribution mechanisms, and global climate and demographic changes” (Global Food Security Group, 2011: 3)

Reasons for this (re-)emergence, and a number of the new and ‘intersecting challenges’, are explored below.

1.0.2 Contemporary Understanding of Food Security: A Multi-Dimensional Phenomenon

A central driver of the emerging interest in food security is the predicted increase in global population. In 2008, at the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation’s (FAO) ‘World Food Security’ conference, it was announced by the Secretary-General of the UN that global food production would need to increase by 50 per cent by 2030 to meet the needs of eight billion people. This was followed by a similarly stark claim from the Director-General of the FAO that food production would need to double by 2050 to feed a world population of nine billion (FAO, 2008). Although these projections have been subject to significant criticism, chiefly surrounding the derivation of the figures (see Tomlinson (2010) for a particularly trenchant response), the criticisms do not detract from the fundamental principle of the predictions, i.e. global population and therefore demand for food is increasing and as Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) (2009: 3) assert, the predictions should be viewed as “a useful way of focusing attention on food production”. Whilst agricultural production has consistently exceeded the rate of population growth in the preceding five decades, previous growth has only “been

achieved at considerable ecological cost and with heavy use of energy and oil inputs” (EFRA, 2009: 13). Whilst critics of Malthusianism, such as Dyson (1996) suggest technological innovation and the recurring nature of demand and supply means there should continue to be ‘no insurmountable problems’ in meeting the world’s growing demand for food, as Lobley and Winter (2009: 4) highlight, such optimism “underplays two trends – first, the impact of climate change [...] and secondly the dependence of agriculture on a finite energy source, oil.”

In addition to population growth and increased demand for food, the world’s per capita consumption of meat and dairy is growing, particularly in Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC) such as India and China. These marked dietary changes – or what Popkin *et al* (2012) refer to as the ‘nutrition transition’ – associated with rising incomes, are anticipated to further intensify as population growth plateaus. For example, livestock consumption is anticipated to increase by 46 per cent between 2006 and 2050, from 561 kcal/person/day to 820 kcal/person/day in China, and 94 per cent and from 184 kcal/person/day to 357 kcal/person/day in India in the same period (World Resource Institute, 2013). The shift in demand from plant-based to more resource-intensive products also has wider implications for agriculture’s environmental footprint and thus climate change that, in and of itself, is a palpable threat to the achievement of food security (see below).

Furthermore, the rise of bioenergy (biofuels, biomass, biogas), represents both a challenge to, and simultaneously, an essential component of delivering food security. Managed correctly, bioenergy offers a sustainable means of powering intensive agricultural practices required to feed a growing population, replacing those which currently contribute to climate change and thus alleviating (and even mitigating) climate change. And yet, the expansion of land used for energy production, competing directly with land required for food production – the so-called ‘food versus fuel debate’ – forms a central concern in the context of the anticipated increase in demand for food. For example, research by Righelato and Spracklen (2007) suggests that just a 10 per cent substitution of conventional transport fuel would require 43 per cent of the cropland area of the USA. More broadly, there are concerns that liquid biofuels have had a significant impact on agricultural markets, but the extent of this is contested. For example, Mueller *et al* (2011: 1623) claim that “biofuel production had a modest contribution to the increase in commodity food prices” whereas Evans (2009: 14) identified biofuels as “the single most significant driver of higher [food] prices”.

More broadly, Ludi (2009: 1) claims that “climate change [...] is considered as posing the greatest threat to agriculture and food security in the 21st century”. The impacts of climate change on food security are complex and far-reaching, impacting on the production and availability of food through changes in agro-ecological conditions, temperatures, and the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Furthermore, climate change is likely to impact upon our ability to utilise

food, causing an increase of the spread of diseases, such as water-borne diseases due to periods of extreme rainfall, as well as increased incidences of common forms of food poisoning such as salmonellosis (see Schmidhuber and Tubiello, 2007). Notwithstanding the need to *adapt* to climate change, the need to *mitigate* climate change also forms a central component of achieving food security, “increasingly challenging conventional, resource-intensive agricultural systems which depend on chemical inputs derived from fossil fuels and contribute significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions” (The Royal Society, 2009: 1). As Fish *et al* (2013: 41) suggest the “presumed need to expand production” needs to be “reconciled with wider limits to sustainability [...] as well as [a] litany of recurring and escalating environmental risks, including salinity, drought and flood”. As conveyed in the following quote, taken from Candel *et al*’s exploration of the meanings of the term food security, sustainability is integral to achieving food security and (certainly long term) food security cannot be achieved without it.

“Sustainability is the key to food security. Greening measures become even more important as they underpin long term ability to produce food” (ASBL, NATAGORA, 2011, see Candel *et al*, 2014: 51)

In this respect, food security is a pragmatic challenge of (arguably oxymoronic) ‘sustainable intensification’ (The Royal Society, 2009).

In addition, the use of the countryside as more than a site for food and energy production remains firmly embedded in our culture and as Lobley and Winter assert, will not wane with an increased demand for food and energy, thus adding a further dimension to the already multifaceted challenge. As Lobley and Winter (2009: 6) summarise, “if we were facing only shortages of food and energy, then a modern-day equivalent of the war time ‘dig for victory’ would be the order of the day [...] however, there are reasons why that is not, nor should be the case”. Instead, we are entering a new-productivist (Lobley and Winter, 2009) or neo-productivist (Burton and Wilson, 2012) regime – “an accumulative and intensive production ideology *within* a multifunctional regime” (Burton and Wilson, 2012: 56).

Previously regarded as “hugely more relevant for developing countries” (Defra, 2006: 23), the onset of the 2008 global food crisis during which the FAO Food Price Index rose from an average of 157 in 2007, to 209 in May 2008 – the single highest monthly average increase since the index began in 1990 (Lobley and Winter, 2009). Whilst specific causes or ‘short run’ drivers, such as harvest failures and low global commodity stocks, the declining value of the US dollar and an increase in biofuel production have been subject to much debate and have proved difficult to disentangle, ‘long run’ drivers, or the large structural changes discussed above, including population and income growth, shifting diets, increasing demand for biofuel and the emerging pressures of adapting to and mitigating climate change are widely understood to have underpinned

the crisis. Although devastating food riots in countries such as Haiti, Egypt, Peru, Argentina and Bangladesh followed the dramatic price increases of basic foodstuffs, and bans and restrictions on exports ensued in numerous countries, from a consumer's point of view, the UK was also affected significantly. According to a BBC survey of household shopping, generic items such as tinned foods increased by around 15 per cent, 7 items in the survey increased by more than 40 per cent and the price of a 125g packet of ham increased by 45.4 per cent (BBC, 2010). The truly global extent of the crisis, reaching countries such as the UK and the USA, prompted developed countries to recognise their vulnerability too, rekindling interest in measures to improve food security (Defra, 2010a). For example, Defra (2010a) claimed, in direct response to the 2008 crisis at least eleven food security policy proposals were made. Although prices have since fallen, the crisis acted as a salutary warning against complacency of developed nations and demonstrated the importance, vulnerability and unprecedented interdependence of global food production systems (The Royal Society, 2009).

Owing to this confluence of extraordinarily interdependent factors, including, but not limited to those described above, food security in this emergent *all-encompassing sense*, now, occupies centre stage in contemporary political and scholarly thinking, overshadowing the intricacies of debates of availability, accessibility and utilisation previously associated with the term.

No longer confined to the more quantifiable ideas of global or national food supplies, the challenge of food security now represents the complexity of economic, social and environmental interdependencies. Transformed from, “a last refuge of backward-looking agricultural fundamentalism” (Lobley and Winter, 2009: 2), to a politically and academically pertinent concept, food security, in this broad sense, must be addressed to avoid impending crisis (Fish *et al*, 2013).

1.0.3 The Family Farm: A Central Component to Achieving Food Security Objectives

A *central component* to achieving both production and wider multifunctional goals, and thus the overall achievement of food security, is farming. The UK has begun to recognise its “moral duty to make the most of its position in the globe and its natural advantages for producing certain types of food” (EFRA, 2009: 61), and subsequently the UK government has stated that “we want UK agriculture to produce as much food as possible” (Defra, 2010b: 12). More specifically, although conspicuously absent from emergent scientific and political discussion surrounding food security, at the core of these grand pledges and ultimately the delivery of food security objectives, is the family farm. Because, as asserted in the opening paragraphs of Gasson and Errington's (1993: 1) study into the family farm business, and which remains pertinent today, “farming as it is practised in the United Kingdom and other market industrialized countries is predominantly a family business”. For example, in the European Union, 98 per cent of farms are understood to be run by a

‘natural person’¹ (European Commission, 2007) and elsewhere, in the US, 97 per cent of holdings were classed as ‘family farms’ by the US Department of Agriculture. In the UK, a recent survey revealed how 71 per cent of farmers had come to be farming because of familial succession (ADAS *et al*, 2004), and a similar survey of 255 farmers across six areas in England, found a total of 84 per cent of farmers operated an ‘established family farm’², covering 86 per cent of the land included in the survey (Lobley *et al*, 2002). Globally, over 98 per cent of farms are described as family farms, producing at least 56 per cent of the world’s agricultural production (FAO, 2014). Defined here by the existence of a close link between family and business or the condition of ‘family-ness’, the family farm irrefutably represents a key stakeholder in, and essential component to, the delivery of food security goals:

“Now [...] family farmers are faced with responding to the challenge of the ‘perfect storm’ of rising demand for food at the same time as commentators envisage an increasing role for energy production from farmland, increased demand for water and adapting to and mitigating climate change” (Lobley and Baker, 2012: 1)

Yet, as Fish *et al* (2013: 40) highlight, the academic community, currently knows *very little* about “how those responsible for managing agricultural land are responding to, and rationalizing, different sentiments associated with imperative as they begin to have practical and material influence”; an omission this research intends to address.

The lack of engagement with the family farm in this context is a surprising lacuna, given that agriculture is perched on the brink of major change, inherent to the emerging food security agenda (Sage, 2012), and, as Potter (1986: 187) adduces, “at a time of potentially rapid policy change [...] it is essential that the behaviour of farmers as change agents and policy operatives is fully understood”. Furthermore, as has long been recognised, and applies equally here, “crucial to the *response* of any farmer to a complex set of policy and market signals is the nature and trajectory of the business in question” (Winter, 2000: 56) – in other words, farmers may behave and respond to policy or market signals in ways that we would not always anticipate or in ways that are not necessarily economically rational. A factor, or more accurately, a process, that has been recurrently identified as a key influence in farmer behaviour (see Winter, 2000; Viaggi *et al*, 2011), and forms a central focus of this research, is intergenerational farm transfer or succession (both terms are interchanged throughout the subsequent chapters).

¹ The European Commission (2007) defines a *natural person* as ‘a real human being’ as opposed to being a private or public organization

² An *established family farm* refers to a farm run by operators who are at least the second generation of their family to be farming on the same farm or nearby land

1.0.4 Succession and the Food Security Agenda

Succession, defined as the transfer of managerial control over the use of farm business assets (Gasson and Errington, 1993), is understood as one of the prime objectives of the family farm. It typically, but not always, involves the transfer of the ‘home farm’ to a successor (or in some instances multiple successors), or it can refer to the transfer of capital to purchase a new farm business.

In its most basic sense, intergenerational succession “represents the renewal of the family farm” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 49) and more widely, forms a “fundamental aspect of the sustainability of family farming systems” (Lobley and Baker, 2012: 2), determining the overall industry structure, total number of farmers and farm families and occupancy of the land (see also Brookfield and Parsons, 2007). Alone, the family farm’s prevalence and monopoly over the productive resources essential to sustainable food production, justifies research effort surrounding succession in this context. This need is reinforced by Defra’s (2008: 28) suggestion that “one of the most important contributions that the UK can make to global, and our own, food security is having a thriving and productive agriculture sector” – a state, that is in part, dependent on succession.

The process of intergenerational succession is itself, an intriguing topic. The ability of the family farm to reproduce itself, generation after generation, typically passed through the male line, via the eldest son, is a longstanding and powerful notion which has understandably captured the interest of many scholars, who have sought to understand exactly *why* this is the case. Whilst an array of previous research has explored the role of distinct factors for this phenomenon, such as, socialisation and the importance of farm involvement (Brandth and Overrein, 2013; Silvasti, 2003; 2012), the value of intergenerational continuity (Salamon, 1992) and the role of historical identities and a sense of belonging and attachment to the farm (Gray, 1998), these explanations have come under heavy criticism for their failure to depict the complexity of the process and provide a holistic explanation for commitment to continuity (see Fischer and Burton, 2014).

Increasingly, speculation surrounding the impact of the shift from a ‘society of duty’ to a ‘market place of opportunity’ (Gullestad, 1997) that has freed individuals, at least in part, from tradition and taken-for-granted norms (Beck, 1994), on successor upbringing and thus successor creation is raising doubts over the existence and ongoing availability of a next generation of farmers (Villa, 1999; Fischer and Burton, 2014), with wider potential implications for the industry’s propensity to respond to the food security challenge.

As forms a central argument throughout this research, in responding to the ‘challenges of the future’ (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 60) – i.e. the food security challenge, *benefit* can be derived from succession or more specifically, ‘effective succession’, defined by (1) identification of a successor

and (2) the subsequent smooth and timely designation of managerial control (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 60). Although exactly how the emerging food security agenda will manifest itself remains unknown, chiefly because the science and technology remains immature (Lobley and Winter, 2009), axiomatically, it will require exertion and adeptness on the part of the family farm; characteristics associated with effective succession. Impressing “something of its own structural and moral pattern on the way farm businesses develop” (Hutson, 1987: 228), a range of literature demonstrates how farms with an identified potential successor are typically characterised by positive behaviours and adaptations, including increased incidences of adaptation, expansion and progression – the so called ‘succession effect’ (Potter and Lobley, 1996a). Also valuable is the ‘successor effect’ (Potter and Lobley, 1996a) – the inclusion of the potential successor, and importantly, their ideas in the farm business. This is thought to be particularly valuable to the delivery of food security objectives, which “depends on a vibrant, innovative and professional UK farming sector” (EFRA, 2014), as former National Farmers’ Union (NFU) president, Peter Kendall highlighted (see EFRA, 2014), young farmers are better at embracing new technologies and new thinking which is vital to the industry. As Lobley *et al* (2010: 61) suggest, *effective succession* in the form of “these two ‘effects’ are clearly in the interests of efficient farming for the business and country, providing perhaps the best model for succession.” Furthermore, pertaining to the means of transferring managerial control, evidence suggests successors who gain managerial control in a smooth and timely fashion are typically better placed to run the farm business, post-handover, armed with appropriate skills, knowledge and confidence. Inversely, lack of preparation represents a tangible threat to the post-handover farm business performance and development (Weston, 1977; Errington, 2002).

Unfortunately, given the anticipated benefits of *successor identification* and the importance of sustainable family farming systems, the last two decades have seen the popularisation of the notion that British farming is facing a crisis in succession (Ward and Lowe, 1994; Ward, 1996; National Westminster Bank, 1992), attributable to many of the difficulties the industry has suffered. For example, decline in farm incomes, migration of newcomers into rural areas, the buoyancy of alternative professions, successive Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms and the 2001/02 Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak, dissatisfaction with farming in line with post-productivist policy discourse and generally poor public perception of farming and farmers has seen farming reach a particularly low ebb (see Lobley *et al* (2005a) for a discussion of the social impacts of agricultural restructuring), impelling concern about the appeal of farming to the young mind.

“They’re feeling persecuted, they’re feeling vulnerable, they’re feeling unwanted and they’re feeling as if the whole world doesn’t want farming” (Stakeholder Discussion Participant, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 28)

“Farmers actually don’t feel that they want to stand up and show themselves in the community as being farmers” (Rural Clergyman, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 29)

More recently, research has identified how the state of the industry has caused many incumbent farmers to actively deter their children away from farming (see Gill, 2013; Price and Conn, 2012) – sustaining concern about the availability of a next generation. However, the veracity of claims of a numerical crisis in succession are dubious (and are extensively discussed in Chapter 3), neglecting the well-documented resolve of the family farm and their commitment to continuity, and disregarding available empirical evidence which supports no-such decline in commitment, commentators (see Uchiyama *et al*, 2008) have suggested the ‘real problem’ of succession lies in the reluctance of farmers to relinquish control. As chairman of the National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs (YFC), Claire Worden, has recently asserted the problem does not lie with the *number* of new entrants:

“Young people *are* taking up farming as a career [...] but very often they’re part of the wider family. The older generations aren’t letting go of the reins” (cited in May, 2014)

Disconcertingly, given the importance of smooth and timely transfer and adequate potential successor preparation, handover has been highlighted as a particular problem in England, where the potential successor spends much of his career working *for* the farmer – so called ‘farmer’s boy’ syndrome – has been observed in nearly one-third of cases (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008).

The overall accuracy of our understanding of succession, including factors such as succession status, potential successor intentions’ and the process of the transfer of managerial control has been debilitated by a reliance on the incumbent farmer in data collection methods, and a surprising neglect of the potential successor as a research participant. In response to this, to enable their inclusion in the research process, and thus strengthen our understanding of succession status and the process of succession – key factors in the industry’s response to the litany of demands on it – this thesis offers a working definition of the potential successor.

A *second* and *interrelated* aspect this research deals with, running parallel to the discussion of the potential impact of succession on delivery of food security objectives, is, inversely, the impact of food security on the perception of farming as a career and thus, its influence on succession.

As the idea of food security has (re-)emerged, the importance of farmers as producers of food and (although to a lesser extent) energy, has re-embedded itself in the minds of the public. In contrast to farming’s poor standing, which has fuelled concern over the availability of a next generation and the morality of passing the family farm onto a next generation, the advent of the food security agenda seems to have prompted a nascent shift in the way the public are thinking about and

relating to farming, and is being embraced by agricultural groups, farmers' advisors and industry associates. As Meriug Raymond, the former NFU deputy president and chair to the AgriSkills Strategy summarised:

“If you go back 10 years, it was far more sexy for people to go into the City and other profession, but there is a much bigger appetite to go into farming now [...] The debate has moved on, where food security and the need to produce more food has come to the fore, particularly following the publication of the Foresight report” (cited in Farmers Guardian, 2011a)

Lobley and Winter (2009: 2) draw on Gordon Brown's speech at the NFU Centenary Conference in February 2008, noting how he stressed the 'core responsibility' of British farmers is 'to grow and produce the majority of food consumed by British people', whilst they assume the 'front line' in adapting to and mitigating climate change; “farmers, as producers of food and fuel in a dangerous world, are being valued once again” (Lobley and Winter, 2009: 2).

Speaking at the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) forum in Torquay in April 2012, Jonny Williams, Wales YFC Rural Affairs vice chairman, noted the new demands on agriculturalists and the opportunities farming for food security offers next generation farmers, who “will have to be economists, commodity traders and current affair specialists. They need to know of the latest disease challenges and chemical resistances, of weather patterns in Argentina, Ukraine and New Zealand, of demographics in China, India and Africa, not to mention the national debts of our European colleagues” (cited in Farmers Weekly, 2012a).

Despite the colloquial positivity surrounding the industry owing to the food security agenda, with the exception of Fish *et al*'s (2013) work, very little attention appears to have been given to the impact of these discourses in the context of farmers' lives. More specifically, the impact this positivity is having on the appeal of farming and thus succession is unknown.

Whilst it may be logical to assume farming's improved public standing, emergent emphasis on production, (further) opportunity to incorporate science and technology into farm work and so on, will provide a welcomed tonic to the previous 'drudgery' of farming, as Meriug Raymond has previously described it, will secure or perhaps increase numbers of those interested in succeeding to the family farm, we simply do not know, particularly as motivations for farming are typically complex and often strongly rooted in tradition and familial ties. So, whilst, Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012: 235, emphasis added) anticipate rising to the demands of the food security challenge, or the onset of 'the renaissance in agriculture', “will *undoubtedly* influence the minds of potential successors”, there is no empirical evidence to suggest whether this is the case, or if it is, in what way it is influencing them. Given the importance of a next generation to farming for food security

and the benefits to be unlocked from ‘effective succession’, an understanding of *how* the agenda is being interpreted by and is influencing both potential successors and incumbent farmers is essential and therefore forms a central focus of this research.

1.1 Research Aims and Objectives

With the food security imperative as an overarching context, this research seeks to further develop an understanding of succession as a process and its influence on farmer behaviour. Reciprocally, it seeks to explore the influence of the food security agenda on the attractiveness of farming as a career, and thus, the appeal of intergenerational succession for both farmers and their potential successors.

Specifically, the research sought to fulfil the following research objectives (Table 1.1):

Table 1.1
Research objectives

1.	To understand how and why succession has shaped land occupancy
2.	To add to and develop the body of knowledge relating to farm succession by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. exploring the impact of succession status on farmers’ attitudes and behaviours; b. exploring the successor routes in place
3.	To understand the intentions of potential successors and to understand what influences their intentions
4.	To assess how, if at all, the concept of food security is understood by farmers and potential successors

This research is qualitative in nature and seeks to develop an in-depth examination of experiences, attitudes, feelings and intentions of farmers and potential successors regarding succession, in the context of the food security agenda. Its findings are based on data from 26 farmer and 19 farmer-nominated potential successor semi-interviews, based on one case study area within the South West of England. Research using a case study is a direct response to the dominance of social surveys in both rural and agrarian geography (Winter, 2012), and using semi-structured interviews, a response to the dominance of quantitative research methods in previous succession literatures, as observed by Uchiyama *et al* (2008). The 1941-1943 National Farm Survey (NFS) was utilised as a means of recruiting participants and supporting/facilitating interview narratives, with key data from the NFS, such as the owner and the size of the farm, as well as the farm boundary recorded at the time of the Survey, added to a Geographic Information System (GIS) and presented to research participants. Data was analysed using a thematic and broadly inductive approach. Owing to a litany of factors, including but not limited to, the desire to give much needed voice to the farming community in the context of the food security agenda and chiefly, the need to prioritise the potential successors’ experiences given their neglect in previous research, the research findings draw extensively on participant narratives.

1.2 Summary of Research Contributions

The study makes many original contributions to the understanding of both intergenerational farm transfer, and more broadly, food security.

Firstly, by offering a geographically focused, qualitative insight into succession, it further develops our understanding of succession as a process – something Dyck *et al* (2002) have suggested we know surprisingly little about, and simultaneously answers calls from Uchiyama *et al* (2008) and the wider research community for more ‘in-depth and qualitative approaches’ to reveal the complexities and intricacies masked by quantitative studies that have, generally, dominated the research field. Stemming from a lack of understanding of exactly who the potential successor is, as alluded to in the introductory discussion in this chapter and as developed in Chapter 3, understanding of succession, including the succession status of farms and the process of transfer of managerial control has largely derived from research principally reliant on the incumbent farmer, although there are some notable exceptions (see Price and Conn (2012) and Fischer and Burton (2014)); this is particularly debilitating when considering such a (potentially) contentious topic, where, for example, a farmer’s understanding of his or her succession status may be entirely different to that of the potential successors. This research represents an unequivocal response to the neglect of the potential successor by offering a clear working definition of the potential successor, allowing them to be explicitly incorporated into the research process. Not only does the proposed definition allow the inclusion of the potential successor, strengthening and improving the accuracy of our understanding of succession issues, it is hoped the definition and associated conceptual framework offered will be utilised by others in future succession research.

Another central contribution of the research pertains to its inclusion of the farming community, or more specifically the family farm, in discussions of food security – a surprising lacuna highlighted by Fish *et al* (2013). Furthermore, it critically considers the potential impact of succession on the family farm’s propensity to respond to the imminent and multifarious demands; a consideration absent amongst scientific and political rhetoric.

Whilst there has been much colloquial speculation that, linked to the food security agenda, farming as a career is becoming a more attractive option for young people, there is currently little empirical evidence to suggest how the farming community are interpreting and thinking about the emergent agenda; this research begins to address this absence.

In terms of the method implemented, use of the 1941-1943 NFS as a means of aiding recruitment and supporting interview narratives offers a new way of utilising the Survey.

1.3 Thesis Structure

Following this brief introduction to the research area and context, this thesis is structured around eight subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the concept of succession, and reviews the key literature pertaining to it, including reasons for succession and the impact of succession status and patterns of succession.

Chapter 3 builds directly on this, using evidence from a range of succession literature to present a case for *effective succession* in the context of the food security challenge. It also reviews the literature surrounding the supposed ‘crisis in succession’, using available empirical data to explore the veracity of these claims, and in doing so, exposes the general and debilitating absence of the potential successor from data collection methods in the succession literature. It concludes by introducing the idea of the ‘renaissance in agriculture’ and postulates as to (the extent of) its impacts on farmers, potential successors and ultimately, succession – issues which are addressed later in the research.

By way of preparing for and grounding the ensuing methodology and analysis chapters, Chapter 4 provides some broad theoretical foundations. It firstly justifies and explores the implications of adopting the modified political economy approach, before introducing some of the wider societal changes and their relevance to and influence on the family farm and the upbringing and socialisation of farm children. Finally, in direct response to the absence of ‘the successor’ from data collection methods highlighted in Chapter 3, it offers an innovative conceptual framework, including a working definition of ‘the potential successor’ which is utilised in the method design.

Chapter 5 describes the methodology and methods used to conduct the research. It starts by introducing and justifying use of a case study approach and the choice of case study area. It then explores and critically reviews the sources and methods of data collection, including use of the 1941-1943 NFS as a recruitment and interview tool, local informants and semi-structured interviews with farmers and their nominated potential successors. It also offers a discussion of key ethical considerations for the research and presents the methods of data analysis used.

In the interests of situating these findings within the wider research context, and thus making clear the overall contribution to the field, the findings in these chapters are discussed alongside previous literature *throughout*.

Chapter 6 begins the analysis with a foundational exploration of incumbent farmers’ entry into farming, including their experiences and motivations. A typology of the different entry routes is offered, which primarily demonstrates the dominance of traditional linear generational farm transfer, but also the influence of family farming ideals *beyond* this traditional model.

Subsequently, the importance and desirability of successor identification to farmers are discussed – it is here that the influence of food security emerges – with farmers referencing farming for food security as an opportunity for their potential successors. Farmers’ understandings of the term are then critically discussed, revealing a significant (and puzzling) disparity between farmers’ broader understanding of the challenges facing the industry and how they define the term.

Having established the importance and increasing desirability of succession, Chapter 7 explores the succession status of participating farms, and the subsequent impact of succession identification by drawing on examples. Using both farmer and potential successor narratives, Chapter 7 continues by describing the types of transfer of managerial control occurring. It recognises two broad types, which by drawing on wider sociological literature, it attributes to the emergence of a period of ‘reflexive modernization’ and the impact of an increasing societal emphasis on individuality and freedom from tradition and expectation. A typology is offered that suggests types of succession are the product of potential successors’ ages and thus, the nature of their upbringing. The chapter then considers the types’ respective merits in the context of above-mentioned food security objectives. Implications for the conceptualisation succession routes are discussed (with specific reference to Gasson and Errington’s ‘ideal types’) and an original conceptualisation, based on the types observed, is offered as a contemporary alternative.

Chapter 8 draws on potential successors’ narratives to explore their intentions and accompanying motivations. Findings broadly corroborate succession status according to incumbent farmers as presented in Chapter 7, although potential successors appeared notably more confident about eventually succeeding than farmers were. Reasons for this discrepancy are offered. Building directly on the typology developed in Chapter 7, which divided potential successors broadly according to age, a discussion of their divergent motivations (including the role of food security) and reasons for them ensues. Subsequently, general conclusions about the role of the renaissance in agriculture amongst participating potential successors, and more widely, are offered. Potential successors’ understandings of food security are also explored and discussed, revealing a similar mismatch between the term and their general grasp of food security issues as observed in the analysis of farmers’ understandings of the term.

Chapter 9 discusses the key findings of the research and presents an overarching summary of the conclusions in relation to the original research objectives (Table 1.1). It also considers the wider implications of the findings. Following this, the chapter offers some critical reflections on the method and the research process, and lastly, it makes some suggestions for further research to advance understanding in this field.

Chapter Two: An Introduction to Succession

2.0 The Process of Succession

Succession is widely understood as “imperative in family farming” (Price and Conn, 2012: 96) and refers to the transfer of managerial control over the use of farm business assets (Gasson and Errington, 1993). According to Gasson and Errington (1993: 183) the terms *inheritance*, *succession* and *retirement* are interchangeable in the body of literature, “giving rise to considerable confusion”. *Inheritance* simply refers to the legal transfer of ownership of the business assets; *succession* refers to the transfer of managerial control over the use of said assets, while *retirement* signifies the withdrawal of the present manager from managerial control and/or manual work on the farm. It is important to consider that “succession is not a single event but is (or should be) a process that takes place over an extended period of time” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 51), a process that can have significant and widely documented implications for the farm business. Quite simply, farms with an identified successor consequently tend to follow contrasting trajectories to those on which a successor has not been identified or definitively ruled out (Potter and Lobley, 1996a; 1996b).

Despite the long-predicted demise of the family farm, family farming continues to be the most hereditary of professions, attributable to the clichéd but nonetheless accurate understanding of farming as ‘a way of life’, characterised by an intense sense of duty to ‘keep the name on the land’ (Price and Conn, 2012). For example, work by Gasson *et al* (1988) estimated that over 80 per cent of English and Welsh farmers were ‘farming stock’. Later, Lobley *et al* (2002) revealed that 84% of surveyed farms operated ‘established family farms’³, responsible for 86% of the area covered in the survey. More recently, Price and Conn (2012) revealed that 82% of farmers in their survey had inherited the farm business. For Lobley *et al* (2010: 50) “the international prominence of succession as the means of farm transfer should, alone, suggest the need for greater understanding and effort”.

2.1 Farming: The Most Hereditary of Occupations

There is a vast literature exploring the continuing and powerful cultural requirement for generation after generation to remain on the farm.

Stemming from manor-dominated areas in Europe where Lords favoured single heir inheritance in order to maintain economic viability (de Hann, 1994), the practice of leaving the majority of their wealth and all their land to their eldest son has become a long-established tradition for English

³ An established family farm refers to a farm run by operators who are at least the second generation of their family to be farming on the same farm or nearby land

landowners. In a recent reflective piece in *Agriculture and Human Values*, based on his own experiences of selling his family farm, Kuehne (2013: 204) describes the influence of this longstanding tradition on his entry into farming:

“The tradition that I was part of required one child from the farming family to continue on as a farmer. For me, the power of tradition meant that in some ways the choice to become a farmer was never consciously made – I was destined to become a farmer”

This ‘abbreviated decision process’ as described by Kuehne (2013), was also identified by Gasson and Errington (1993: 91) who suggest how “farmers who were born into farming families [...] exercised little conscious choice in becoming farmers themselves” having been “socialized into the role and *internalized* the values of farming at an early age”. Silvasti (2012: 4) provides perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of successor creation, asking “how and why, generation after generation does one of the children in the farm family choose to become a farmer?”. She identifies continuity of family farms as ‘the most central goal in their way of life’, which in turn, forces parents to allocate the role of the successor to one of their children, typically the eldest son. Having made this distinction, “the cultural boundaries set for the successor are narrower than the boundaries set for the siblings” (Silvasti, 2012: 17), with successors typically reporting extensive roles in the farm from an early age, compared to their siblings who were “encouraged to educate themselves, to socialize with peers and to have a life outside the farm” (Silvasti, 2012: 17).

Numerous commentators have observed an inability of farm successors to articulate their reasons for wanting to farm (Gasson and Errington, 1993; Villa, 1999; Silvasti, 2012), believing it is simply their destiny or purpose in life. Furthermore, the farmers Silvasti (2012: 26) interviewed stressed how entering farming was *their* choice and no one else’s, but as she concludes, their “freedom is employed by choosing nonfreedom”, owing to the subtlety of socialisation, or the establishment of limits, that ultimately left identified successors with no other options than farming. As Silvasti (2012: 26) summarises, “choosing what you already have, does not make the choice anymore unreal”.

Kuehne’s experiences illustrate the influence of narrow boundaries as described by Silvasti (2012), but also highlight the importance of the successors’ own understanding of their ‘position’ as ‘another generation’ in a long line of farmers in their intention to succeed. For Kuehne (2013: 204) his position as a fifth generation farmer, meant he felt he ‘had little choice but to continue’:

“Sometime during my high school years my parents gave me the choice as to whether I would become a farmer or not; but I felt that having spent all of my life on a farm, and being saturated with the farming cultural from parents and friends from an early

age, as well as being the fifth generation of an unbroken line of farmers, I had little choice but to continue the farming tradition”

However, Gill (2013: 76) suggests “the temporal elements of this process have been neglected”. Using empirical examples, Gill (2013: 85) recognises the importance of the temporal elements of succession to successor motivation; her understanding of the present as ‘contingent and temporary’, and of individuals as merely “placeholders in the passage of time” is useful in understanding the persistence of the family farm and the continued desire of successive generations to take over the farm. Critically, for Gill (2013: 85) it is “their relationship to past and future generations gives their lives and actions meaning, defining who they are and what they do”. As Kuehne (2013: 204) identifies “farmers are not simply representing their own identities but also the identities of their families stretching from the past to the future”. This notion is also observed by Siebert *et al* (2006) who states how the farm does not belong to its present individual owner, but is owned by the wider family, including both past and future generations. Similarly, Fischer and Burton (2014: 9) suggested how that desire to continue is “constructed as part of long-term identification processes that have led to his (self) identification as the successor”. Furthermore, Riley (2009) recognises that this ‘positionality’ begins early in the lifecourse. In his seminal work with farm children, Riley (2009: 252) observes how even as children, they actively “situate themselves within a longer history, and show a clear commitment to the past which serves as a blueprint for their current action”.

More broadly, Price and Conn (2012: 93) attribute this enduring desire of successive generations to choose to become a farmer to what they describe as a “*compulsion* to ‘keep the name on the land’” (emphasis added). Whilst they observe increasing economic pressures on successors, the “pull just to ‘keep going’, to take over the reins and to imprint the family name even more firmly in the land appears to be a key concern for potential successors” (Price and Conn, 2012: 102). Whilst this idea of attachment to land is logical and widely supported (see Burton, 2004; Marshall, 2009), Kuehne (2013: 210) suggests in reality attachment is a little more complex than this and for him, related instead to “the practice of farming and the use of tools and machines in the act of production” which he believed embodied both his farming knowledge and identity.

Fischer and Burton (2014: 2) are critical of the inability of previous explanations to explain why succession occurs, suggesting, what they term ‘factor-based approaches’, “where succession is seen as the result of a combination of favourable discrete factors” such as those cited above, are low in explanatory value because they “represent relatively separate bodies of literature with distinct focuses”. As an alternative, they introduce the concept of *endogenous succession cycles* to holistically represent the three intertwined processes they identify as key to understanding why succession occurs, including:

- *The construction of successor identity*: This refers to how the children, potentially from birth, enter multiple and ongoing identification process, in the course of which they may come to see themselves as the successor (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 8)
- *Progression on the 'farm ladder'*: This concerns how children may become progressively involved in the hierarchy of farm labour and decision-making tasks (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 11)
- *Farm trajectories*: This refers to changes made in farm business due to both passive and active influences of the potential successor (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 13)

Although they only draw on a single case study of a successful succession, unlike previous research, their results succeed in teasing out the complex links between the various factors and innovatively demonstrate how the *construction of successor identity*, *progression on the farm ladder*, and *farm trajectories* become intertwined to result in succession. For example:

“As the certainty of succession increases, growing displays of commitment and the enhanced skills and knowledge of the successor enable the simultaneous initiation of development strategies and, through these changes to farm trajectories, the practical re-affirmation of successor identities [...] Practical affirmation of successor identity provides renewed ground for further succession-orientated and successor-led changes and so on” (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 14)

As Price and Conn (2012: 105) assert, “there appears to be *something* about growing up on the farm that leads men to often imbue a sense of pride of being born to farm, a sense of destiny, of it being in their blood. This is clearly hard to pull away from” (emphasis added). Although this ‘something’ Price and Conn describe is perhaps a little ambiguous, something that, as above Fischer and Burton attempted to conceptualise, there is not one discrete explanation for why successive generations of farm children take over the family farm. Yet this unique and complex process continues to shape land occupation in the UK and beyond, with significant implications for farmer behaviour that are explored below.

2.2 The Impact of Succession on Farmer Behaviour

Impressing “something of its own structural and moral pattern on the way farm businesses develop” (Hutson, 1987: 228), identification of a successor, provides both a means and an incentive to expand production. Despite rigorous engagement by a number of academics, the platform such family arrangements, such as succession, provide for farm agri-economic decisions continues to be underestimated (Price and Conn, 2012) by researchers who have sought to predict the impact of political and economic changes.

In response to this ‘neglect’, Winter (2000: 56) champions the importance of considering the farm business context, stating: “crucial to the response of any farmer to a complex set of policy and market signals is the nature and trajectory of the business in question [...] particularly factors such as [...] *whether or not a successor to take on the business was present*” (emphasis added). Seemingly, the response of the individual farm businesses to emerging food security policy *will*, be influenced by the process of succession. Surprisingly however, given that “agricultural uses of land are key contexts in which emerging agendas for food security will find their material expression [...] we know very little about how these agendas are being understood by farming publics” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 40) and there has been *no* consideration for how the ‘complex logic’ of the family farm will influence the manifestation of food security policy.

Potter and Lobley (1996a: 288) distinguish between three influencing factors, offering a useful framework for understanding the principal effects associated with succession and retirement:

- Firstly, the **succession effect** refers to the impact the *expectation* of succession has on the farm business. By anticipating a successor it is likely that the farms may have been expanded or restructured as a means of either supporting the successor and the family on the farm, or to perhaps generate necessary capital to establish children on a separate holding.
- Secondly, the **successor effect** describes the impact successors themselves have on assuming partial or total management control. In some cases, a successor’s entry into the business may be a smooth progression, extending from the time he/she leaves full-time education to work on the farm to the moment of legal inheritance. A stronger successor effect is more likely when the successor climbs the ‘succession ladder’ and assumes more managerial responsibilities. In comparison, succession may be delayed by a father unwilling to retire or cede control, that the successor becomes what Gasson and Errington (1993) describe as a ‘farmer’s boy’, with little influence until the father’s death forces managerial control; this is likely to be followed by a period of dramatic business and land use change as the new operator makes their mark on the farm.
- Thirdly, the **retirement effect** which occurs at the end of the farmer’s career. Farmers lacking successors may at this point decide to run down their farms, or at least extensify production in some way, with a view to reducing the number of hours worked. The process tends to begin with a reduction in the number of hours worked and in the repair and maintenance of machinery and equipment, but may culminate in the sale or reletting of land.

With a particular focus on the *succession* and *successor* effects (Figure 2.1), the ensuing discussion explores the implications of the succession process on farmer behaviour.

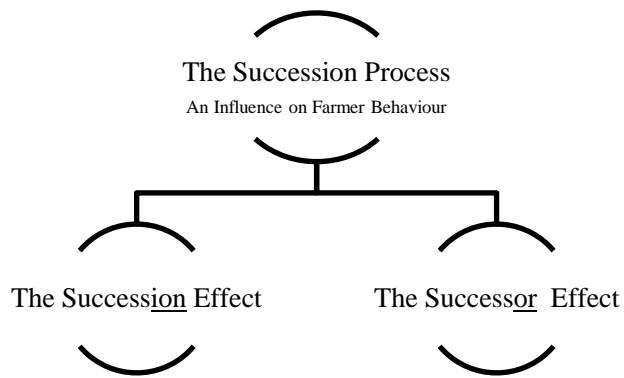


Figure 2.1 The influence of succession

2.3 The Succession Effect

“The designation of a successor opens farm perspectives” (Calus and Van Huylenbroeck, 2008: 1), providing the farmer with the *means* and the *incentive* to expand the farm, invest in capital or increase output. Calus and Van Huylenbroeck (2008) also note how, farm families occupying the same phase of the family life cycle can differ from each other because of the contrasting expectations about the farm’s future.

It is essential to appreciate the “rich research tradition in rural studies of examining the link between intergenerational transfer of farmland, enterprise growth and the persistence of family farms” (Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 107). Sottomayor *et al* (2011: 122) draw on the work of Marsden *et al* (1989), Potter and Lobley (1992a; 1996a) and more recently Viaggi *et al* (2011), to conclude the likelihood of there being a successor “changes the attitude and behaviour of the farmer decision-maker, making them (1) more prone to intensify farm activities, (2) more inclined to invest in the farm business, and (3) less risk adverse” (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011: 123). Whilst it is generally agreed that “very little is known about the actual process of succession” (Lobley and Baker, 2012: 3) the (albeit modest) collection of empirical studies demonstrate “that a farm’s succession status is a good predictor of its trajectory” (Lobley and Potter, 1996b: 189) thus confirming the importance of the process.

Commentators began to recognise that the presence of a successor was a ‘powerful variable’ in explaining the business trajectory of the farm, one of the earliest examples is from Symes (1972: 101) who found that land on non-successor farms was less intensively farmed than on farms where a successor was named, claiming that production on non-successor farms was “closer to subsistence mode than at any point in the normal cycle”. Later, Marsden *et al* (1989: 12) note in the face of “new State policy measures aimed at reducing output [...] environmental regulations and declining levels of commodity price support”, farming families were adopting a variety of coping strategies, the nature of which was decided with “the succession of a son (or daughter) in

mind”. Similarly, Gasson and Errington (1993) claim the transfer of the farm forms one of the principal incentives for building up the business, not just determining the day-to-day decisions, but also longer-term trajectories. Furthermore, it is widely understood that planning for and carrying out succession, “injects new ideas and energies into the business and provides a spur to expansion” (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 288).

In the early 1990s, Potter and Lobley (1992a) highlighted the need to develop an understanding of the decisions made by farmers in semi-retirement and old age, given that in 1991 27 per cent of farmers in the UK were aged over 55; 21 per cent were 65 or more (MAFF, 1991, cited in Potter and Lobley, 1992a) emphasising the potentially profound influence of such farmers (Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 319). Although Potter and Lobley (1992a) initially emphasise the impact of farmer age on land use, using their empirical data they revealed how behaviour in old age is largely influenced by the presence of a successor. In fact, Potter and Lobley (1992a: 325) found that “elderly farmers with successors seem far less differentiated from the rest of the sample, having farmed areas, enterprise structures and levels of farming intensity that are close to the average for the sample as a whole” (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Elderly farmers with and without successors: a comparison

	Elderly with	Elderly without	All farms
	% of farmers		
Permanent Grass	66.2	41.2	51.6
Heavily Fertilized permanent grass	14.8	3.3	13.1
Unfertilized permanent grass	7.3	5.5	7.3
Rough grazing	62.8	31.0	35.0
Average nitrogen use (kg/ha)	74.29	46.62	77.7

Source: Potter and Lobley (1992a: 324)

Ultimately, elderly farmers who had already identified successors affirmed intentions to expand, invest and increase output and generally continue “on the treadmill of intensive farming” (Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 327). Far from the running down of the business, during this period, elderly farmers *with successors* “may see a further gearing up as a younger person takes up the reins” (Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 327).

In Potter and Lobley’s (1996a: 297) later work on the impacts of succession on the different trajectories of family farm business, the use of case studies to exemplify the importance of succession on farm structure and farmer behaviour is valuable, particularly in the case of Mr A:

Mr A had been anticipating the moment when his son would return from full-time education to work on the farm for several years. When, in his mid-teens, the successor indicated that he wanted to come into farming, his father expanded the business by

283 ha and took the decision to go out of dairying and expand into sheep and beef. Extensive re-equipping of the new land (new buildings, draining, reseeding, fencing etc.) was undertaken over the following 5 years. In 1984, the successor was made a full partner in the much expanded family business and since then has married and purchased further land.

Potter and Lobley (1996a: 297) also draw on the experiences of Mr B, who interestingly “claims to take little account of agricultural policy, his main concern being to provide for his sons”, further typifying the importance of succession in determining farmer behaviour.

In contrast, Potter and Lobley (1992a) demonstrate how farmers without successors are significantly more likely to have simplified or reduced their enterprise mix, and this was most commonly expressed in a decision to leave dairying, as well as the low number of farmers conserving their grass as silage. Non-successor farms were also characterised by low capital spending and a similarly static enterprise structure. The absence of a successor was most significant in terms of the amount of purchased inputs, such as fertilizers and farm chemicals, which was likely to be reduced as farmers got older:

“You don’t have the same enthusiasm as you get older. I’ll run the farm down in a few years” (Elderly farmer *without* a successor, Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 326).

“If I’d had a son I’d have gone for intensive enterprises and more investment” (Elderly farmer *without* a successor, Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 326).

Potter and Lobley (1992a) document a range of impacts having or not having a successor can have. In terms of farmer behaviour and intentions, as shown in Table 2.2, both elderly and young farmers with successors were *more likely* to be planning future capital investment than those without a successor. For example, 44.4 per cent of elderly farmers with a successor have made plans for future investment, compared with only 10.0 of elderly farmers without.

Table 2.2
Investment plans of farmers according to age and succession status

	Younger with	Younger without	Elderly with	Elderly without	All farms
	<i>% of farmers</i>				
Plans for investment	51.2	27.0	44.4	10.0	33.9

Source: Potter and Lobley (1992a: 324)

A similarly stark contrast is evident in terms of the intensity of farming, as shown in Table 2.3, 38.5 per cent of elderly farmers without a successor had changed to a less intensive means of farming, compared to only 8.9 per cent of elderly farmers with successors.

Table 2.3

Enterprise change according to age and succession status

	Younger with	Younger without	Elderly with	Elderly without	All farms
	% of farmers				
Less intensive	0.0	30.6	8.9	38.5	18.4

Source: Potter and Lobley (1992a: 324)

As stated earlier, succession “describes a *process* rather than an event taking place at a single point in time” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 183). This is evident in Potter and Lobley’s (1992a: 327) findings, where the opportunities and constraints experienced by elderly farmers without successors, have been shaped by “the legacy of earlier decisions”; in other words earlier decisions based on the lack of a successor, or a low expectation of a successor, are likely to determine the opportunities and constraints facing farmers later in life. Understanding of succession as a *process*, not just as an isolated occurrence considered only in a farmer’s latter years, but an on-going consideration with enduring implications is an important aspect of Potter and Lobley’s (1992a) findings and further testament to the importance of successor influence.

Potter and Lobley (1996b: 184) document the varying patterns of farm development on surveyed farms by identifying the following groups:

- i. *Recent developers*: farmers who have carried out land improvement and intensification from a low base over the period and sought to re-equip their farms with a view to increasing the income earning capacity of the core agricultural business;
- ii. *Consolidators*: farmers carrying out land improvement and intensification from an already high base, again with a view to making the core farm business more profitable;
- iii. *Stabilisers*: farmers making few, if any, changes to land use or farm layout over the period corresponding to a stable or holding pattern of farm business development;
- iv. *Disengagers*: farmers who, while carrying out few changes to the layout or pattern of land use on their farms, have sought actively to reduce household dependence on the agricultural business through diversification and/or taking up employment off the farm;
- v. *Withdrawers*: farmers experiencing a decline in income from agriculture over the period and taking no action to reverse this or seek out new income sources.

Plotted according to succession status of the farm the relationship between the farm trajectory and succession status is visually evident (Figure 2.2), as well as statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. As shown in Figure 2.2, *consolidation* was most common on farms where the successor was present on the farm; *consolidators* were continuing to carry out significant land improvement, “energetically upgrading, intensifying and professionalising their business invariably in partnership with a successor” (Potter and Lobley, 1996b: 187). It is also important to note, the

expansionist nature of those in the ‘too early’ category, 36 per cent of which were *recent developers*, indicative of their early position within the lifecycle “on which a new blood effect is likely to be much in evidence” (Potter and Lobley, 1996b: 187).

At the other end of the scale, the trajectories of farmers for whom succession has been ruled out were characterised by *disengagement* or *withdrawal* from agriculture. For Potter and Lobley (1996b: 188), farmers with successors not yet present on the farm, “are rather harder to characterise”, although many of these absentee successors are children over 18 who are pursuing full time education, a significant percentage are employed off the farm, leading them to allege, in these cases, the farm concerned is perhaps too small or (financially) inept to support both generations.

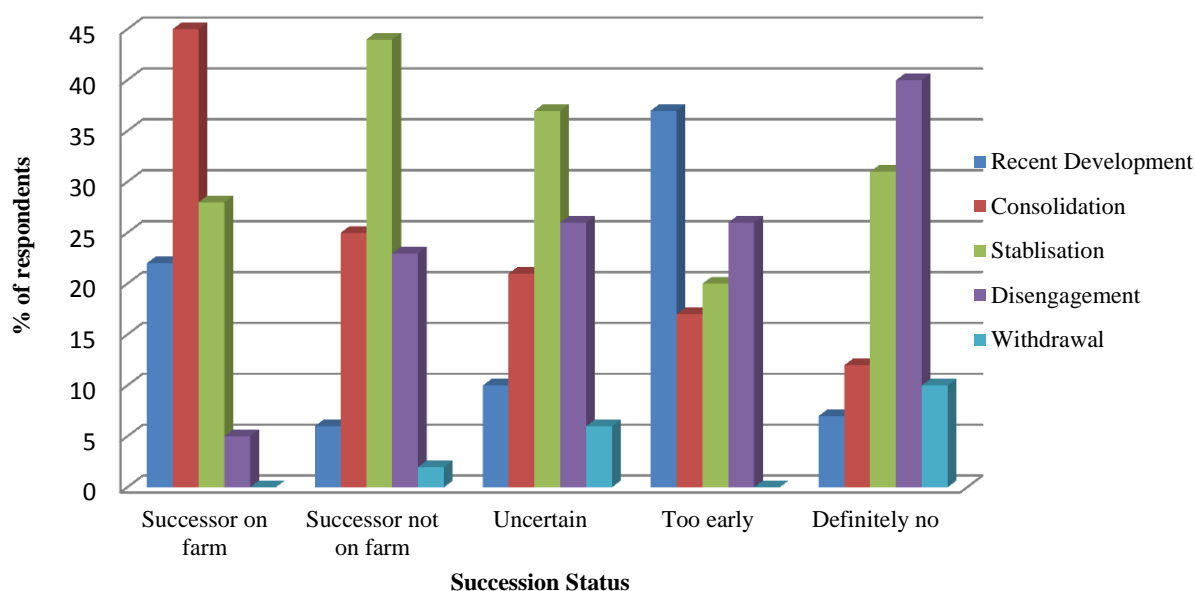


Figure 2.2 Succession status and farm trajectory (Source: based on Potter and Lobley (1996b))

Elaborating on the ‘succession effect’, Calus *et al* (2008: 45) hypothesised that “there is a positive relationship between a farmer’s early awareness of whether a successor is available and the management of the farm”. Using Total Farm Assets (TFA) as an indicator of farm value, Calus and Van Huylenbroeck (2008: 4) identify a positive relationship between the existence of a successor and farm value that “confirm econometrically the succession effect”. Quite simply, TFA value was higher on farms with designated successors, than farms where succession was uncertain (Table 2.4) and “if no successor is designated, the TFA does indeed decrease toward the liquidation value of the farm” (Calus *et al*, 2008: 47).

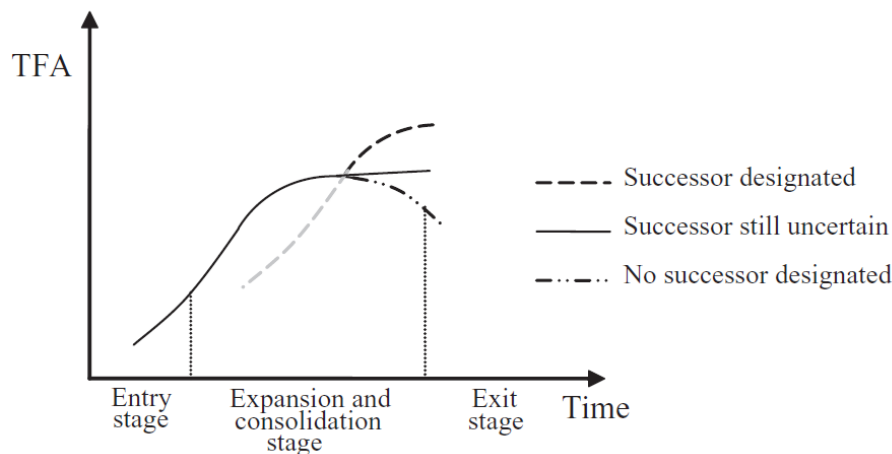
Table 2.4

Mean TFA according to succession status

Succession Status	Mean TFA
Successor Designated (n=44)	632,719
Successor Uncertain (n=105)	471,876
No Successor Designated (n=86)	336,926

Source: Calus et al (2008)

Using Flemish Farm Accounting Data Network (FADN) data, Calus and Van Huylenbroeck (2008) calculated that identification of a successor increases TFA value by an average of €37,763, illustrating the impact the presence of a successor can have on the farm business. The authors conclude “a timely designated successor stimulates the PDM to make extra farm investments” (Calus and Van Huylenbroeck, 2008: 4). The impact is further demonstrated in Calus *et al* (2008) conceptual model of the succession effect (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3** Conceptual model of the ‘succession effect’ (*Source: Calus et al, 2008: 43*)

Although specifically concerned with the relationship between farm adaptation and succession at the rural-urban interface, characterised by a limited land base, higher land prices and land fragmentation, Inwood and Sharp’s (2012) recent research further reinforces the importance of a successor. For Inwood and Sharp (2012: 112) “the availability of an heir represents a pivotal moment within the farm lifecycle”, creating what they describe as a cross roads between negative adaptations (winding down in preparation for exit) and positive adaptations (enterprise growth in preparation for additional family members). Based on 51 face-to-face semi-structured interviews, representing 33 farm families, Inwood and Sharp (2012) identified 4 types of adaptations to succession status.

Although only three farms in their sample were unable to identify an heir, all three farms had entered a static state, further illustrating the “link between the absence of an heir and stagnation of enterprise development” and ultimately “conforms to our expectation that successors (or lack of)

can have a substantial impact on enterprise trajectory” (Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 112). Unfortunately, Inwood and Sharp offer no definition of who they mean by heir, nor successor, which they use interchangeably. Broadly, ‘heir’ implies both familial *and* non-familial and can simply mean a legal benefactor, whereas ‘successor’ implies a family member, intent on continuing the work of the incumbent farmer. Despite this caveat, their results are noteworthy. Heir identification was characterised by three different types of adaptation strategies, including *expanding*, *intensifying* and *entrepreneurial stacking*, as a means of creating opportunities for the next generation (Figure 2.4).

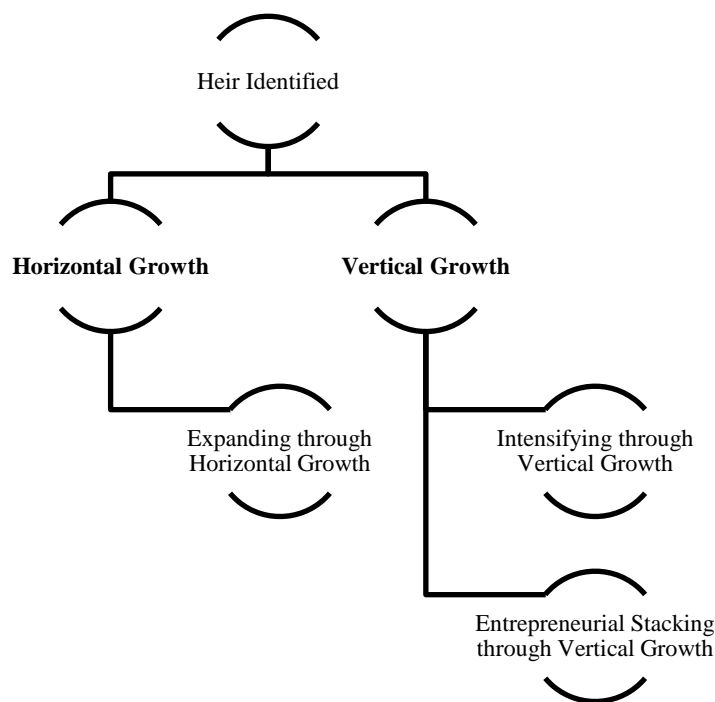


Figure 2.4 Adaptation strategies as identified by Inwood and Sharp (2012)

Those *expanding through horizontal growth* were characterised by a strategic increase in farm area and were implementing “normal adaptations as growth strategies in order to support additional family members on the farm” (Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 112). Frequently, *expanders* were also investing in new packing, storage and processing apparatus and technologies, and frequently expressed a common worldview, cognizant of how ‘bigger was better’. Where land is a limiting factor for agricultural expansion, many farmers resort to “a process of *intensification* – increasing production of or shifting into higher value crops to support more family members on the farms existing land base” (Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 113). *Vertical intensifiers* were characterised by a strong business orientation, flexibility and adaptability and an market know-how. Intensifiers were also highly attuned to the benefits of niche marketing or agritourism, rather than conventional production. In addition to intensifiers, Inwood and Sharp (2012: 114) recognised a distinct form of vertical growth, characterised by farm families “making room for the interests and talents of the

next generation by adding new enterprises to the existing one *without* increasing their land base” (emphasis added). Unlike intensifiers, *entrepreneurial stackers* were adding on production systems that were profoundly different from their current farming activities.

By interviewing 33 farm families, with a refreshing concern for the “aspirations of other family members, particularly children” (Bryant and Johnston, cited in Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 109), Inwood and Sharp (2012) illuminate the temporal dimension of the succession process, less prominent in research focusing solely on the existing farm principal. Inwood and Sharp’s (2012) research usefully categorises different adaptations; testament to farmers’ desire to achieve farm reproduction. The different adaptations demonstrate the importance of succession status to farm trajectory, and critically “reveals the *continued* significance of farm succession” (Inwood and Sharp, 2012: 116, emphasis added). Unlike less nuanced accounts, which have simply (although importantly) identified the bifurcated impact of succession status, such as Potter and Lobley (1992; 1996a; 1996b), Inwood and Sharp’s (2012: 116) work has begun to highlight the heterogeneous nature of successor-identified farm adaptations, “that move beyond one size fits all” approach common to earlier studies.

2.3.1 The Succession Effect – A Determinant of Policy Delivery

In addition to previous work, which has established the more general impact of succession status on farmer behaviour and farm business trajectory, a number of commentators have more widely identified succession status as an influential factor in farmer response to policy reform.

In his assessment of the environmental impact of the 1992 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms on British arable agriculture, Winter (2000) identified that the reforms had done little to reverse the trends of post-reform intensification and concentration, specialisation. Whilst he identified CAP-specific factors, such as the policy measures being insufficiently focused on environmental improvement, he also draws attention to the role of individual farm circumstances, including the role of succession status:

“One of the key findings [...] was that the same set of policy instruments could produce radically different responses on different farms [...] crucial to the response of any farmer to a complex set of policy and market signals is the nature and trajectory of the farm business in question. Thus following earlier work, the research showed that an individual farmer’s response was heavily dependent on the farm business context, particularly factors such as farm indebtedness, whether or not a successor to take on the business was present” (Winter, 2000: 56)

Later, Viaggi *et al* (2011: 503), who sought to identify the determinants of the reactions of farm households to the decoupling of the CAP as a result of the 2003 reform, also highlighted “the

importance of personal and structural variables in determining the impact of decoupling on investment behaviour”, including “in particular the existence of a successor”. This rightfully reemphasises the importance of “farmers as change agents and policy operatives” (Potter, 1986: 187), and reinforces belief in the importance of farm families and succession to the eventual delivery of food security policy.

For Viaggi *et al* (2011: 496) to understand the impact of policy “a better understanding of the interaction between policy and the variety of determinants affecting investment behaviour” are required. With a particular focus on on-farm investment behaviour across 8 EU countries, Viaggi *et al* (2011: 500) observed that in 75 per cent of cases, “the statement that no change will occur due to the introduction of the SFP prevails”, but their analysis revealed differing determinants of investment behaviour. Although the country of residence emerged as the most influential factor in response to decoupling, Viaggi *et al* (2011: 503) note how “more classical factors emerge as determinants, *in particular* the existence of a successor”. For example, amongst arable and permanent crop farmers, those *without* a successor, only 6 per cent had increased on-farm investment, compared with 27 per cent of farmers who *had* identified a successor (Viaggi *et al*, 2011).

Although the method used by Viaggi *et al* (2011: 503) does not afford an in-depth understanding of the intricacies and dynamics of individual farm decision making, they conscientiously acknowledge how “further qualitative in-depth research is needed in order to better understand the actual mechanisms of reaction to policy”. Despite this exploratory nature, research by Viaggi *et al* represents an important advancement in the understanding of policy implications; marrying together the changing political and economic climate with a number of personal variables from the start of their analysis. More importantly, with the aims of this research in mind, their findings highlight the importance of succession status on policy manifestation on the ground.

In a similar vein, although with a more specific focus on the impact of succession status from the outset, Sottomayo *et al* (2011) assess the importance of succession status to farmers’ intended behaviour under a future policy scenario⁴. Research by Sottomayor *et al* (2011: 122) builds on the “unquestionable influence of the likelihood of a successor on European farmers’ behaviour” in a bid to address the “relatively scarce” collection of published evidence in this connection. Sottomayor *et al* (2011) examined whether the succession status of the farm affected a number of attitude measurements related to farm management, including; the timing of retirement or date of leaving active farming; willingness to change; willingness to innovate the activities mix; willingness to intensify production; and the intention to leave farm land idle in the future. In

⁴ The future scenario corresponded closely to the emergent CAP framework, although this was not known at the time of the survey

contrast to the findings of Viaggi *et al* (2011), Sottomayor *et al* (2011) found limited, patchy support for the influence of succession status on the attitudes and behaviour of farmers towards their future situation.

Based specifically on the work of Viaggi *et al* (2011), Sottomayor *et al* (2011: 131) *predicted* for Germany, the UK and Portugal:

“farmers with a certain or likely successor, when compared to those without a successor, would be more flexible about changing their mix of farm activities, more prone to adopt new farm activities and more willing to intensify farm production”

Using Chi-Square as a measure of significance, the association between successor identification and intention to alter mix of farming activities was firmly rejected for all three countries (Table 2.5). Results were similarly inconsistent in support for the readiness to adopt new activities, with only data from Portugal supporting this relationship. The association between presence of a successor and intensification of production was statistically significant (at the 5 per cent level) for the UK and Portugal only. The only significant association measured in all three countries (all at the 1 per cent level), was the presence of a successor and the farmers’ decision to abandon or leave some of their farm land idle, in the future. Although initially it appears some of the findings seemingly contradict dominant and enduring understandings of the impact of succession status on farmer behaviour, further consideration of Sottomayor’s methodology, leads to permissible questions regarding the expediency and relevance of farmers’ propensity to *alter their mix of farm activities* to our understanding of farmer behaviour in the context of succession status – i.e. *what can we tell from a farmer’s propensity to alter mix of activities?*

Table 2.5

The likelihood of having a successor in relation to changes to the mix of farm activities

Future Intentions	“Would alter mix of farm activities” (%)			Statistics	
	Successor possible or certain	Unlikely or definitely no successor	n	df	χ^2 (significance)
Germany	33.8	32.1	1174	2	0.55
UK	31.0	30.7	1679		0.91
Portugal	34.5	29.6	1227		0.07

Source: Adapted from Sottomayor *et al* (2011)

As shown in Table 2.6, the significance of the relationship between succession status and farmer behaviour varies according to the country; the association between succession status is significant, certainly in 3 out of a possible 4 behavioural changes, and “nearly significant” in the fourth (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011: 128) in the case of Portugal. Whereas in Germany the role of succession status seems to be significantly *less influential*. Similarly obvious is the bifurcated influence of

succession on the type of decision making; the role of succession status appears highly influential in the decision to leave land idle and in the cases of Portugal and the UK, a strong determinant of farmers' decision to intensify production. Whereas succession status had no association with farmers' choice to alter their mix of farming activities, nor willingness to adopt new farm activities. However, the broad categorisation of succession status devised by Sottomayor *et al*, which they divide into 'successor possible or certain' or 'unlikely or definitely no successor' to perform the Chi-Square analysis, masks an array of different circumstances and statuses, for example, succession as a *possibility* and a *certainty* are hugely different statuses, which raises a number of questions of what can be told from the analysis.

Table 2.6
Significance of succession status on decision making

	χ^2 (significance)		
	Germany	UK	Portugal
"Would alter mix of farm activities" (%)	0.55	0.91	0.07
"Would adopt new farm activities" (%)	0.31	0.14	0.05
"Would intensify production" (%)	0.99	0.00	0.04
"Would leave idle at least some land" (%)	0.00	0.00	0.01

Source: Adapted from Sottomayor *et al* (2011)

Ultimately, the large volume of quantitative data collected, proposed as a solution to the scarcity of published evidence "based on large surveys or on cross-cultural or international comparisons" (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011: 123), in reality undermines the depth and complexity associated with intergenerational transfer. And whilst their conclusion, that there is "evidence favouring this relationship for *some* of the expected consequences, but not for others" (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011: 130) initially appears to represent noteworthy opposition to the longstanding understanding of succession status as a key factor in shaping farmer behaviour, their inclusion of farmers' propensity to *alter mix of farm activities* in their thesis, as well as their limited categorisation of succession status, means their conclusions fail to weaken the wider understanding of the influence of succession status.

Despite a limited range of research, it is evident that succession has a "considerable influence on farmer behaviour and their responsiveness to particular *policy measures*" (Errington, 2002: 2).

2.4 The Successor Effect – Transfer of Managerial Control

As identified by Potter and Lobley (1996a), the presence of a successor, who may be assuming partial or total management control, can influence decision making and thus influence the

trajectory of the farm business. It is observed that “the influence a successor actually exerts may be gradual or sudden, depending on the process of succession itself and how efficiently it is accomplished” (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 288). The **successor effect** is another example of the importance of family farm dynamics to farmer behaviour and farm business trajectory; the key patterns of which are explored below.

2.4.1 Patterns of Succession

Errington (1998: 3) notes how “existing literature describes many different patterns for the transfer of the managerial control of the farm family business from one generation to the next”. Unsurprisingly, these different patterns for the transfer of managerial control of the farm family business have varying impacts on the trajectory of the farm business during that period. Gasson and Errington (1993) identify a number of ‘ideal types’ in the patterns of transfer (Figure 2.5). These types are important in understanding the **successor effect** because each gives successors varying opportunities to influence farm decision making.

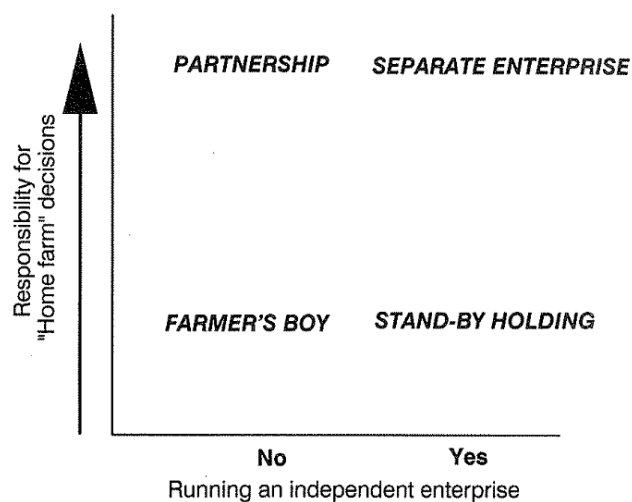


Figure 2.5 Patterns of succession (*Source:* Gasson and Errington (1993: 204))

Although Gasson and Errington (1993: 203) recognise “the enormous variation in practice between different farm family businesses” they do suggest it is logistically “useful to identify a number of ‘ideal types’”.

In their investigation into succession with Ohio farmers, Steiger *et al* (2012: 96), unfairly criticise Gasson and Errington’s (1993) typology (see Chiswell, 2013), which coincidentally they erroneously refer to it as Whitehead, Lobley and Baker’s typology, suggesting, “the process and types of successors may be not as clean as suggested”, without taking into consideration how Gasson and Errington (1993) pre-empted such criticisms. Although, of course, “in reality, the patterns of succession are many and varied and each may have some element of more than one

ideal type” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 206), the ‘ideal types’ proposed offer a useful means of understanding and discussing the **successor effect**.

1. The *stand-by holding* was first discussed by Blanc and Perrier-Cornet (1993) who described an informal set up which involves the son establishing a holding, close by and strongly linked with the parent’s farm. As demonstrated in Figure 2.5, by running a stand-by holding the successor is largely independent, however, has limited input into ‘home farm’ decisions. By working for several years on the holding the successor is able to hone their husbandry and managerial skills. Upon retirement or death, the successor’s holding can be amalgamated with the larger farm, or in some cases, the generations may swap farms, with the successor’s farm functioning as a ‘retirement holding’.
2. Characterised by similar levels of independence, is the *separate enterprise*. The separate enterprise may take the form of a separate pig unit or sheep flock, but unlike the standby holding the successor is given the opportunity to develop skills “which he is increasingly able to apply to the main enterprises on the farm on which he works alongside his father” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205).
3. In many cases, the successor may work in *partnership* with his⁵ father. In doing so, autonomy is not as high as it would be in a separate enterprise, nor a stand-by holding, but it gives the successor the opportunity to “gradually acquire considerable responsibility for particular aspects of the management of the home farm” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205).
4. In contrast, the *farmer’s boy*⁶ describes a common situation, where “the potential successor may spend many years working with (or more accurately “for”) his father” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205), yet has little input in terms of managerial activities or decision making, and is mainly utilised as a source of manual labour. Essentially, the successor is a hired worker and resultantly “has little opportunity to develop the managerial skills that he will eventually need in taking over the family farm business” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205). The *farmer’s boy* is likely to gain managerial control suddenly, with the father’s retirement, incapacity or death and is therefore “ill-prepared for the management of the farm” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205). Steiger *et al* (2012: 99) recognised six of the successors in their qualitative study of succession in Ohio, fit the *farmer’s boy* type, however, it is important to note, in contrast to the popularised belief, many of whom demonstrated “good business and managerial skills and high motivation, perhaps more so than their fathers” (Steiger *et al*, 2012: 99). In view of Steiger’s findings, they suggest the *farmer’s boy* may be much more than the

⁵ “His father” (rather than a gender neutral or inclusive term) is used here to reflect Gasson and Errington’s (1993) terminology, whose typology, they describe as “represent[ing] ideal types” of succession, reflecting the dominance of (at least at the time they were writing) male successors, who were typically the eldest son

⁶ ‘Farmer’s boy’ (rather than a gender neutral term) is used to explicitly reflect Gasson and Errington’s (1993) terminology. Although the term ‘boy’ was used by Gasson and Errington to reflect typical scenarios, the term can be applied to females and simply denotes successor experience, which is not gender specific.

hired worker Gasson and Errington describe, and can even be a well-respected, integral and even well paid part of the family business. It is their exclusion from higher-rung management decisions and the subsequent implications for the ability to manage the farm that defines them as a *farmer's boy*.

The foregoing discussion, has illustrated the potential routes frequently taken by successors on family farms and alluded to the impact the presence and varying involvement of a successor can have on the trajectory of the farm. Potter and Lobley's (1996a) **successor effect** or the presence of a successor, assuming varying levels of management control and their influence on the farm business, has a temporal dimension not made explicit by the term. Simply, the presence of the 'enthusiastic successor' in the farmer's *living years*, can significantly impact upon the farm business, for example, Hastings (1984) suggests that 75% of farmers he interviewed felt that the son's involvement in the farm had been of significant benefit to the farm business. However, in addition to this, the level of management and responsibility given to the successor(s) during the farmer's living years has a discernible impact on the trajectory of the farm on the death or incapacity of the farm principal. It is well documented that Gasson and Errington's (1993) *farmer's boy* will lack the "motivation, confidence and competence to make decisions, thus increasing the risk of expensive mistakes being made" (Hastings, 2004: *online*) when assuming control of the farm. In this sense, the **successor effect** is *twofold*, the type and level of input the successor can influence the farm trajectory *during* the life of the farm operator, but can also shape the trajectory after the (working) life of the farm principal, because of what the potential successor has learnt during this time.

2.4.2 Stages in the Succession Process

For Potter and Lobley (1996a: 289) the successor effect is most prominent "after the successor has climbed enough rungs on the 'succession ladder' to be able to wield some sort of influence over the way the business is run". The succession ladder was first identified in Commins and Kelleher's (1973) study of Irish farmer's inheritance and succession patterns, and provides an excellent example of how the means of transfer of managerial control, can influence decision making and thus determine the trajectory of the farm business; concluding "most Irish farmers' sons do not climb [the ladder] quickly enough for their own good, for the good of the farm or for the good of Irish agriculture as a whole" (Commins and Kelleher, 1973: 86). Commins and Kelleher (1973: 87) attributed the poor state of Irish agricultural to the "imperceptible process whereby sons acquire responsibility but without any real power in the crucial aspects of farm management".

In the UK the pioneering work of Hastings in 1984, which he later summarised in 2004, documented various patterns of management control transfer, although observing that "under normal circumstances involvement will usually be a slow evolving process" (Hastings, 2004:

online). By scoring sons according to the extent of their responsibility for management activities and decisions, Hastings (1984) identified four main phases to the succession process, each representing an incremental increase in the input to decision making (see Table 2.7). In the early phase, successors were likely to be heavily involved in day-to-day work planning, the supervision of farm staff and the type and make of machines. By the fourth phase the “level of decision-making is considerably enhanced” (Hastings, 2004: *online*), however, control over the finances “represents [the] father’s final bastion of status and control in the business” (Hastings, 2004: *online*) and thus the majority of farmers had to wait until their father’s death or failing health before the fourth and final phase of succession occurred.

Table 2.7
Stages in the succession process

Start here	
1. Socialization	Extends from birth to working at home full time. The sons develop their personality and attitudes to family and farm life and as a result of working on the farm between school may learn many of the basic farm skills.
2. Technical Apprenticeship	Extends from starting work to achieving 30-40 per cent involvement in management after working at home for four to six years, by which time the father is in his mid-50s. Main role consists of general farm work, some day-to-day planning, supervision of staff and helping decide makes of machines and equipment.
3. Partnership	A. Starts when father is in his mid-50s and continues until father is in his early 60s. Sons are increasingly involved in technical management decisions particularly related to crop and stock treatments and the planning of long-term projects.
	B. Starts when father is in early 60s and extends to mid to late 60s. Sons take more responsibility for staffing, crop planning and enterprise balance. At this stage sons have up to 65 per cent of managerial responsibilities.
4. Controller	Son becomes increasingly involved in buying and selling as father’s age and health decline in his late 60s. Final transfer to controller unlikely to take place until age and health retires the father.

Source: Hastings (1984: 229)

Errington and Tranter (1991) build on Hastings’ (1984) earlier work, developing the ‘succession ladder’ (Figure 2.6), observing that work most frequently delegated to successors is likely to be connected to *existing* farm resources, whereas financial decisions are reserved for the father, representing what Hastings (1984) describes as the ‘last bastion of father’s control’. In his discussion of the ‘problems of succession’, Weston (1977: 237) attributes the father’s notorious reluctance to hand over power, or indeed recognise that it may be necessary for him to do so, to “putting off the evil day, mental idleness, fear of his own security, fear of loss of interest in the farm and purpose in life, lack of confidence in his son – or he may have had to wait himself to succeed and so why shouldn’t his son have to wait, and so on”. For Weston (1977) this reluctance is the source of three key ‘problems’. *Firstly*, it provides the “grounds for souring discontent

within the family” (237), by stifling the typically energetic son’s desire for responsibility, urge to make decisions and desire to gratify their ambitions. However, Weston (1977: 238) counterbalances his point by suggesting progress up the ladder in *any* business can be equally frustrating, claiming “the Civil Service offers few people the chance of complete control at the earliest age that they are equipped and qualified to exercise” and warns that “although there are problems [specific to intergenerational *farm transfer*] they should be seen in a proper perspective”. *Secondly*, with age, the principal farmer is likely to “become a brake on the development of the business” (Weston, 1977: 239), particularly if the successor has been away to University or another farm with new ideas and plans. *Thirdly*, given the limited exposure to management decisions, the successor’s “big problem may be being able to cope whenever they get control” (239).

In contrast, and providing an exemplary example of the value of rigorous engagement with research subjects, Hastings (1984: 199) claims “it would be inappropriate to create a picture of despotic financial controllers, whose intention is purely to control and manipulate”. Instead, he believes the reality is ‘rather less jaundiced’, characterised instead by variation in the relationships and effectiveness with which farmers and their successors work together.

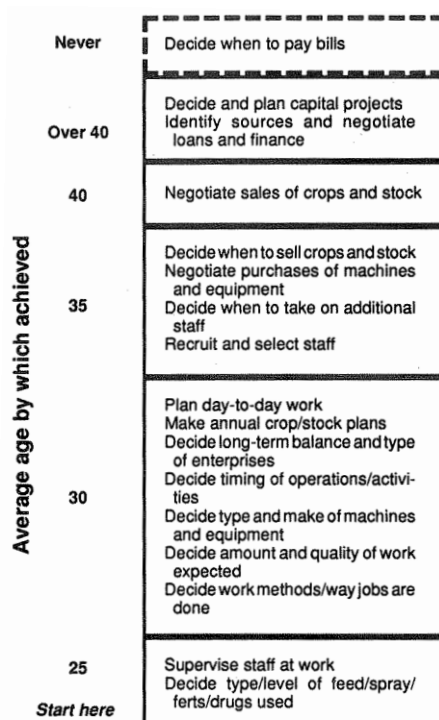


Figure 2.6 The succession ladder (Source: Errington and Tranter (1991: 121))

Whilst the rungs on the succession ladder are a common feature on different farms “the speed at which the successor ascends the ladder varies considerably” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 218).

For Gasson and Errington (1993) the reasons for this variation in rate of ascent through the different ‘rungs of the ladder’ include characteristics of the father, of the successor and the farm.

Although the empirical evidence reviewed here clearly points to the reality of a ‘ladder’ of increasing responsibility, Lobley (2010: 14) expresses his dissatisfaction with the understanding of such a pivotal process, claiming “evidence is patchy, being confined to certain parts of the country, or dated such as Errington’s 1997 survey”, as well as glossing over the inimitable set of dilemmas and tensions, that will be unique to each farm family. Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 46) call for “a range of more in-depth and qualitative approaches to reveal tensions involved”; tensions that thus far have been disguised by indisputably useful, but nonetheless generalised frameworks.

2.5 An Introduction to Succession – Some Conclusions

The process of succession is imperative in family farming and the enduring desire of successive generations of farm children to pursue farming has meant farming remains one of the most hereditary professions. As demonstrated in this chapter, a range of research has identified how succession, including both the identification of a successor – the ‘succession effect’ – as well as the influence of the successor themselves – the ‘successor effect’ – impacts on farmer behaviour and farm business development, causing farmers to behave in ‘unexpected’ ways when considering the prevailing political economic conditions or context. Furthermore, as demonstrated, the process of the transfer of managerial control can take many forms and at occur at different rates, with the (intensity and type of) impacts of successor identification depending on the type of transfer. As we, as a planet, face increasing pressure to feed a growing global population, set to reach 9 billion by 2050, increasing demand for some food types by up to 70 percent in an increasingly constrained context, a clearer understanding of farmer behaviour is more important than ever before. Given the patent impacts of farm succession on farmer behaviour and thus farm business trajectory, the following chapter builds on these emergent themes by exploring the implications of succession in the context of wider debates surrounding global food security and associated challenges.

Chapter Three: The Importance of Effective Succession

3.0 The Importance of Effective Succession to Achieving Food Security

British agriculture, endowed with natural and economic advantages in food production (Fish *et al*, 2013) now recognises its ‘moral duty’ to respond, both to secure its own and international food supplies. Set against the widely propagated projections of global population growth, the UK food security strategy maintains: “we need to increase food production to feed a growing world population” and “we want UK agriculture to produce as much food as possible” (Defra, 2010b: 12), in the context of increasingly acute limits and emerging constraints, including environmental change, fossil fuels and land (Fish *et al*, 2013). In the context of these increasing and multifarious demands on farmers and the agricultural sector, Lobley *et al* (2010: 61) suggest, effective succession, measured firstly in terms of the existence of a successor, and secondly, according to the ‘smoothness’ of the transfer of managerial control (Figure 3.1), is an imperative factor in the achievement of local, national and global food security.

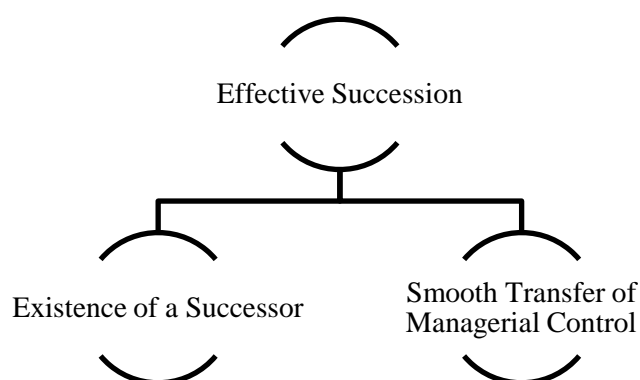


Figure 3.1 Effective succession

The ensuing discussion **links** the widely promulgated impacts of effective succession to the delivery of the food security agenda. Lobley *et al* (2010) and Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012) provide the only recognition of this relationship, suggesting that in ‘challenging times’ effective succession is “in the interests of efficient farming for the business and country, providing perhaps the best model for succession” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 61). Although this recognition forms a much needed starting point in highlighting this relationship, they fail to fully expound their reasoning.

Drawing on the wealth of previous research, it is clear that *effective succession* is conducive with a litany of **positive adaptations and outcomes** (Table 3.1):

Table 3.1

Effective succession: positive adaptations and outcomes

<i>Existence of a Successor</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Adoption of new activities	Farmers with a certain or likely successor appeared more likely to adopt new farm activities from a list of 12 new activities (Sottomayor <i>et al</i> , 2011); In the rural-urban interface, farms with an identified successor were shifting into new, higher value crops (Inwood and Sharp, 2012).
Intensification of production	Farmers with a certain or likely successor appeared more likely to intensify production (Sottomayor <i>et al</i> , 2011); Young and elderly farmers with successors present were more likely to have increased farming intensity, since 1980, than their counterparts lacking a successor (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); Formal entry of a successor resulted in land management and landscape change, commonly including intensification (Marsden and Munton, 1991).
Enterprise growth	Young and elderly farmers with successors present were more likely to have expanded their enterprise, since 1980, than their counterparts lacking a successor (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); In the rural-urban interface, farms with an identified successor were more likely to be undergoing enterprise growth than those without (Inwood and Sharp, 2012).
Investment in capital	Farmers with a successor present on the farm were most likely to have undertaken significant capital investment (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); Young and elderly farmers with successors were more likely to have future plans for capital investment than their counterparts without an identified successor (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); Identification of a successor prompted the increase of Total Farm Asset (TFA) value by an average of €37,763 on Flemish farms (Calus <i>et al</i> , 2008); 68% of farmers with an identified successor had invested in some form of pollution control between 1981 and 1991, compared with only 40% of farmers without an identified successor (Ward and Lowe, 1994).
Acquisition of land	Elderly farmers with successors were more likely to have acquired land (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); Farms where a successor was present on the farm were most likely to have increased area farmed between 1978-1993, compared with farms where succession had been ruled out (Potter and Lobley, 1996b); In the rural-urban-interface, growth through land accumulation was a common occurrence for grain, livestock, fruit and vegetable producers who had identified a successor (Inwood and Sharp, 2012).
<i>Efficient Transfer of Managerial Control</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Sufficient preparation of successors	Where successors are given responsibility for home farm decisions (<i>partnership</i>), are running their own enterprise (<i>stand-by holding</i>) or both (<i>separate enterprise</i>), the successor has the opportunity to develop appropriate skills and knowledge that adequately prepare him to run the farm (Errington, 2002).
Transfer of farm specific and tacit knowledge	The process of succession transfers farm specific or ‘soil specific’ knowledge to the successor, which is highly detailed and locally specific (Corsi, 2009); On farms large enough to establish a partnership between the farmer and the successor, the father passes on to the son the indispensable know-how based on intricate knowledge of the ‘specific constraints of the holding’ (Blanc and Perrier-Cornet, 1993).

In stark contrast, *ineffective succession* is widely associated with the following **negative behaviours and outcomes** (Table 3.2):

Table 3.2

Ineffective succession: negative adaptations and outcomes

<i>No Identified Successor</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Leaving land idle	Nearly 80% of surveyed farmers with unlikely or no successor, suggested, in line with predicted changes to the CAP, they intended to idle at least some land (Sottomayor <i>et al.</i> , 2011).
Static management practices	Many farms in the rural-urban interface without an identified heir were characterised by lack of growth and development (Inwood and Sharp, 2012);
Disinvestment in the farm	One third of farms in the rural-urban interface who had failed to identify a successor were actively selling and auctioning land off (Inwood and Sharp, 2012); Farms for whom succession was uncertain or unlikely, across six English study areas, were typically leasing or renting out their land (Lobley and Potter, 2004);
Farming less intensively	38% of elderly farmers without successors had reduced the intensity of production on their farms in the last ten years, compared with only eight per cent of those with successors (Potter and Lobley, 1992a); Land on non-successor farms was less intensively farmed than on farms where a successor had been identified (Symes, 1972).
Disengagement and withdrawal	35% of farmers without successors were disengaging, compared with only 4% of farmers with an identified heir (Potter and Lobley, 1996a); 10% of farmers without successors were withdrawing, compared with 0% of farmers with an identified heir (Potter and Lobley, 1996a);
Simplified or reduced their enterprise mix	40% of elderly farmers without successors expressed they had simplified enterprise structure, compared with only 11 per cent of elderly farmers with successors (Potter and Lobley, 1996b)
Pursuing another major income source	40.5% of young farmers and 32.5% of elderly farmers without successors claimed they had another <i>major</i> non-agricultural income source (Potter and Lobley, 1996b);
<i>Inefficient Transfer of Managerial Control</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Ill-equipped successors	On the farmer's death or incapacity technically competent successors frequently struggle with the 'new world of business management' (Hastings, 1984); The unprepared successor has had little opportunity to develop the skills required to manage the farm "with detrimental effects on the business [and] on the efficiency of resource use" (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 219); The unprepared successor who has worked only as a 'farmer's boy', is a potential threat to the survival of the farm family businesses (Errington, 2002).

It is widely proclaimed that agriculture will need to meet global increases in demand for food whilst overcoming a litany of complex challenges, including changing weather patterns and changes to the distribution of and access to water. In addition, as Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012: 234) suggest "demands for the provision of a raft of other goods (i.e. bioenergy and industrial crops) and services (i.e. conservation and recreational) are also increasing in the context of volatile commodity prices, diminishing non-renewable resources and climate change". In the

context of this myriad of challenges, effective succession and associated *positive* adaptations and likely outcomes are conducive with rising to the food security challenge. Generally characterised by increased incidences of adaptation, expansion and progression, *successor-farms* are evidently best placed to respond to the catalogue of challenges.

3.0.1 The Importance Identifying a Successor to the Delivery of the Food Security Agenda

As highlighted in Chapter 1, *production* forms a central component of emerging UK food security policy, with Defra (2010b: 12) appealing for “UK agriculture to produce as much food as possible”. Successor-farms’ propensity to intensify production is therefore particularly encouraging.

However, as Lobley and Winter (2009: 6) aptly state, “if we were facing only shortages of food and energy, then a modern-day equivalent of the war-time ‘dig for victory’ would be the order of the day”; efforts made to meet growing demand for food *must* sustain our environment, safeguard our landscape and produce what consumers want (Benn, 2009). Given the patent and well-documented environmental impacts of intensification, it seems somewhat incongruous to insist that effective succession, and its evident association with intensive farming practices, are unquestionably “in the interests of efficient farming for the business and country” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 61), particularly when there is evidence to suggest farmers *without* successors, specifically elderly farmers, are known to “reduce their use of purchased inputs like fertilizers and farm chemicals” (Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 332). However, Ward and Lowe (1994: 177), with specific reference to Potter and Lobley’s (1992a) findings warn of the danger in assuming that the generality of farmers without successors “are more responsive and better placed to take up environmental measures”. Although their research recognises that farmers without successors’ propensity to farm less intensively, they also highlight instead, ‘the other side of the coin’, suggesting that “farmers without successors are *much less likely* to want to invest in capital equipment” to, in this case, “improve effluent management and reduce the risk of water pollution” (177).

Whilst there are behaviours more commonly associated with the failure to identify a successor that also appear ‘desirable’, idling land for example is associated with benefits to the landscape, the desirability of successor identification in the context of the food security agenda, is not solely based on the *outcome* of the kinds of behaviours associated with successor identification (listed in Table 3.1), after all, farmers will need to continue to fulfil a plethora of ‘multiple functions’ (European Commission, 2004). Critically, it is the *nature* of these behaviours that make successor identification desirable; with farmers with successors evidently more enthusiastic and motivated, as well as increasingly disposed to adaptation, investment and expansion, driven by their

‘generational stake’ in that successor, which provides both an incentive and means to drive the business forward (Gasson and Errington, 1993).

However, Lobley *et al*’s (2010) belief in the importance of effective succession to the delivery of the food security agenda overlooks the complexity of the interplay between succession status and farmer behaviour. In contrast, Ward and Lowe’s (1994) assessment of the impact of succession status on response to pollution regulation unpacks this multifarious relationship. Just as has been observed elsewhere, they noted how investment in new technologies to manage pollution control was “much more likely to take place on dairy farms where a succession to the next generation is planned for” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 178) (Table 3.3):

Table 3.3

Investment in pollution control technology (1981-1991) and succession status

Investment in pollution control	Is a succession planned for?		
	Yes	No	Don’t Know
Yes	68%	40%	71%
No	32%	60%	29%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Ward and Lowe (1994)

However, they understand this investment as a ‘superficial’ response to environmental management, suggesting instead, “whether farmers have simply invested in pollution control equipment or not is a poor indicator of how sound their environmental management practices might be” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 178). They further explored this relationship by devising the following categories based on how respondents felt about agricultural pollution (Table 3.4):

Table 3.4

Farmer categories according to respondents' feelings about agricultural pollution

<i>Category</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Commitment to family continuity</i>
Radical Farmers	Tended to see pollution as reprehensible, expressing approval of the regulations, describing them as “a good thing” that helps “put agriculture’s house in order”. Farmers in this group were quite empathetic that regulations must be adhered to for the good of the industry. These farmers felt it was the responsibility of the individual farmer to ensure that pollution is adequately prevented.	Lowest commitment to family continuity - less than 50% had identified successors
Ambivalent Farmers	Tended to acknowledge pollution from effluent was a problem and that measures had to be taken to overcome them. Critically, these farmers saw pollution as a problem <i>for</i> farming and not a problem <i>of</i> farming; pollution is a problem because it “can get you into trouble”. These farmers tended not question the need for regulation.	Moderate commitment to family continuity – two thirds had identified successors
Sceptical Farmers	Tended to adopt the stance of “what pollution problem?”. These farmers claim to feel beleaguered by pollution regulation and thought agricultural pollution was far less of a problem than industrial pollution, suspecting that farmers were being more strictly regulated because they were “easy targets”. However, farmers in this group were more likely to have invested in pollution control than any other group.	Highest commitment to family continuity – 80% had identified successors

Source: Ward and Lowe (1994)

Ward and Lowe’s (1994) typology highlights how, despite high levels of investment in or the intention to invest in suitable technologies, those farmers most committed to family continuity were actually limited in their outlook and their reasons for investing were not environmentally-based. Farms expressing a strong commitment to family continuity, although investing in the relevant technology, are actually characterised by an “inward looking and ‘agro-centric’ view of the world” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 181). Ward and Lowe (1994) suggest “how might the seemingly paradoxical finding – that more ‘sceptics’ had invested in pollution control facilities than ‘radicals’ – be explained?”, suggesting those ‘sceptics’ who have invested have ‘of course’ done so *because* of their greater commitment to succession and their primary desire to pass on the farm to their successors with adequate pollution control facilities to satisfy regulatory authorities, rather than directly responding to policy.

Successor-farms, in this case, have based their investment decisions on a “narrower vision of the nature of the problem and of who gains from the investment” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 181), who see issues of sustainability as problems *for* agriculture, rather than a problem *of* agriculture, are

thus adopting reactive strategies to satisfy regulatory criteria. Ward and Lowe (1994) suggested the way these more ‘traditional’ farmers, *bound* by notions of family continuity, are not whole heartedly investing in and utilising pollution management; their superficial investment in technology veiling their disinterest and disregard for delivering or safeguarding wider environmental goods.

Their research highlighted the benefit of ‘radical’ farmers, who were less likely to be committed to family continuity, tended not to be as bound by the notions of family continuity and had “a broader outward-looking view” attributable to “their more extensive social and economic links beyond farming [...] through socializing outside the local farming community” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 181). Thus, these farmers were less likely to see the farming community as a special, detached group, but instead embed themselves, and farming within the wider context, they are aware of “farming’s environmental problems held by that wider society” (Ward and Lowe, 1994:181). Ward and Lowe (1994) conclude that a decline in the commitment to family continuity in farming will result in “adoption of a more outward looking view, the consequences may well be beneficial in terms of farmers’ receptiveness to environmental concerns”. Whilst their research is specifically concerned with farmers’ response to environmental regulations, Ward and Lowe’s findings raise a valid point that needs to be considered in the context of the food security agenda; farms with a high commitment to succession have the *potential to be* ‘blinkered’ by their desire to pass on the farm, which may actually encumber the delivery of policy objectives. What Ward and Lowe’s (1994: 177) research does do well is highlight the need for a more “*detailed* discussion of the interplay” between succession status and (emphasis added); contesting more forthright conclusions as to the impact of succession status. However, Ward and Lowe (1994) perhaps construe too much from the imperfect relationship between commitment to family continuity and understanding of environmental regulation (Table 3.4). Instead, their argument serves as a cautionary reminder of the problems associated with *too much* commitment to family continuity, something that Lobley (2010) also recognises can act as a potential barrier to development and innovation in agriculture or what The Northfield Committee (1979) describe as a ‘closed shop in agriculture’, given that “genuinely new entrants (i.e. those with no previous farming background) bring with them a set of attitudes and skills which equip them to run dynamic farm businesses which meet the needs of contemporary demands” (Lobley, 2010: 16). For example, in their 2005 comparison of organic and non-organic farmers, Lobley *et al* (2005b) revealed that organic farmers were far less likely to have succeeded to their farm. Organic farmers were typically younger, more educated and involved in sales initiatives and other farm based enterprises. Notably, these ‘new entrant’ farmers were able to utilise a multitude of skills from previous employment, typically in sales, business and marketing, that meant organic farmers were frequently generating higher sales revenue (per hectare) than non-organic farms. That is not to detract from the importance of intergenerational

transfer and the benefits to be derived from it, but highlights the need for new entrants, as well as familial succession.

Although the *exact* contours of the emerging political agenda remain unknown, primarily because the science is too immature (Lobley and Winter, 2009), rising to the challenge will undoubtedly require holistic changes to agricultural practice (Sage, 2012), changes that, evidence suggests, successor farms are likely to have the incentive, motivation and means to make. In stark contrast, non-successor farms, characterised by a dwindling enthusiasm, are evidently less well placed:

“If I’d had a son I’d have gone for intensive enterprises and more investment”
(Elderly farmer *without* a successor, Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 326).

“You don’t have the same enthusiasm as you get older. I’ll run the farm down in a few years” (Elderly farmer *without* a successor, Potter and Lobley, 1992a: 326).

3.0.2 The Importance of Effective Transfer to the Delivery of the Food Security Agenda

Having identified a successor, the smooth transfer of the ‘reins of the business’ is also conducive with the proclaimed need to sustainably ‘exploit spare capacity in farming’ (National Farmers’ Union cited in Potter, 2009: 253). Only when given appropriate levels of responsibility and experience during the transfer, it is believed the successor will be adequately prepared to run *all* aspects of the farm, safeguarding the farm post-transfer.

In stark contrast, Lobley *et al* (2010: 61) draw on the example of the ‘farmer’s boy’, who, as already established, will have a worrying “lack of wider farming knowledge, business and managerial skills, and motivation” that will be “required to *drive* the business *forward* through such *uncertain times*”.

However, whilst there is a strong common-sense element to understanding the impact of the smooth and appropriate transfer of managerial control between the generations on the successors’ eventual ability to manage the farm, there is currently a stark absence of family farm literature pertaining to this topic. There are however a number of studies in the more general family business literature that evince the implications of appropriate transfer of managerial control to post-handover successor abilities and subsequent business performance (see Osborne, 1991; File and Prince, 1996; Goldberg, 1996; Cabrera-Suarez *et al*, 2001; Kets de Vries *et al*, 2007; Caykoylu, 2013). Broadly, these studies have empirically demonstrated how damaging the exclusion of the potential successor from *all* aspects of the business can be detrimental to post-handover business performance, and even result in business failure (File and Prince, 1996), and conversely, how post-transition performance is positively affected by the preparation level of business successors. For example, Morris *et al* (1997: 390) proposed and tested a conceptual model of the key determinants

and outcomes of family business (Figure 3.2) and identified that the preparation level of heirs, including factors such as, amount and type of training, type and amount of work experience, entry position in the family business, number of positions held before assuming managerial control and self-perception of preparation levels, as central factors in determining post-transition successor capabilities and subsequent business performance.

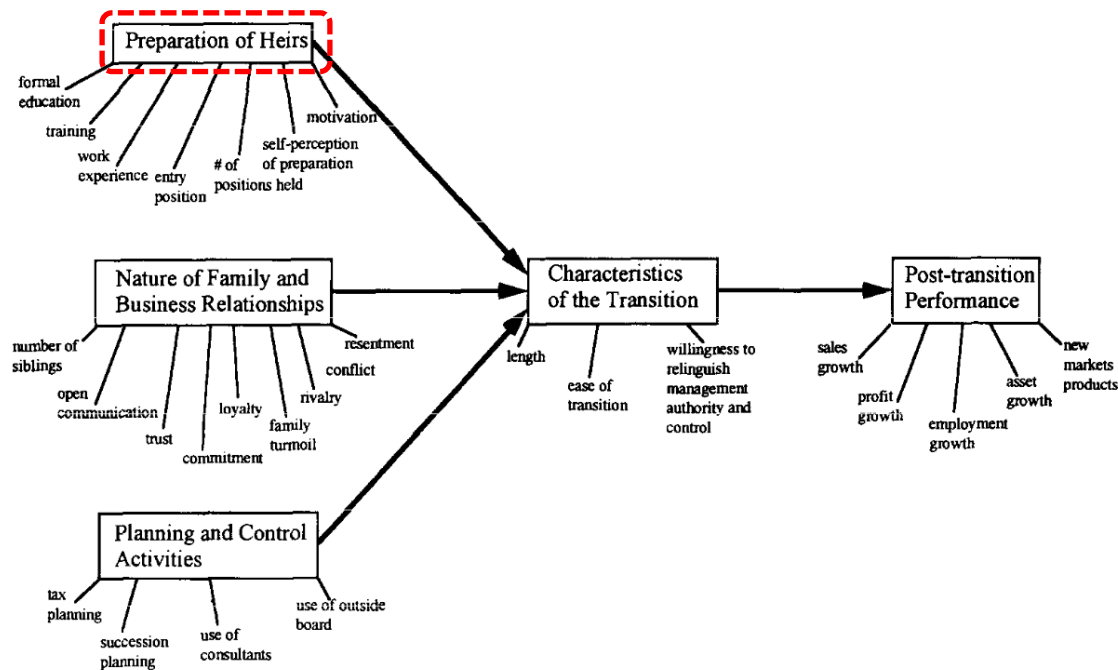


Figure 3.2 Morris *et al*'s (1997) conceptual model of the determinants and outcomes of family business transitions

For Lobley *et al* (2010: 61), at an aggregate level, inefficient transfer of managerial control “may lead to farm businesses less well placed to adapt to and succeed in responding to the challenges of the future”. Fundamentally, given the proclaimed need to secure food supplies in an increasingly constrained context, ineffective transfer of managerial control poses a genuine threat to the UK’s ability to rise to the food security challenge.

3.0.3 Effective Succession – Some Concluding Thoughts

For many commentators, such as Sage (2012), rising to the food security challenge will require new ways of thinking in almost *every* aspect of agricultural production and “without *significant innovation and adaptation* in capacities to produce food, humanity faces a bleak and divided future” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 41, emphasis added). Farming will thus begin to command highly motivated, entrepreneurial, adaptable, knowledgeable and forward-thinking farmers; characteristics that are irrefutably associated with the process of effective succession. Effective succession, although only one piece in the large and complex jigsaw puzzle, is paramount to rising to the food security challenge. Thus, understanding succession, and the likelihood of effective

succession, to enable suitably targeted policy measures, is more important than ever. As we advance into challenging times, indicative of the totemic food security agenda, given existing research findings, it is realistic to suggest effective succession is in the interests of the sector and the nation (Lobley *et al*, 2010); this research explores this relationship further.

3.1 The Succession Crisis

As established, it is generally accepted that “the industry as a whole can derive benefit from the so-called ‘succession effect’, which arises from the early identification of a successor and leads to determined development of the businesses” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 60). Disconcertingly, however, the preceding decade has seen the propagation of the notion that British farming has arduously endured a ‘crisis in succession’, attributable to the 2001/2002 outbreak of FMD, radical CAP reforms, and a period of generally low economic return.

3.1.1 The Crisis

In 1991 a national survey of 26,000 farm business in 1991 found that 48 per cent of respondents had no nominated successors for their farm (National Westminster Bank, 1992). The survey prompted dramatic headlines in the national press, such as ‘Nearly half farms left without future as children plan to get out’, reported in The Guardian on the 29th February 1992 (see Ward and Lowe, 1994). Writing in 1996, Ward (1996: 210) claimed “succession is being increasingly called into question by farm families” resulting in a “gradual decline in the proportion of farmers planning to hand on their farms”. Ward and Lowe (1994) and later Ward (1996) propose how, as an instrumental value, commitment to family continuity has been dramatically eroded. For Ward (1996: 211), it did “not seem too contentious to suggest that farming’s declining economic fortunes may have eroded the commitment to succession in family farming” making the prospect of farming as a career choice “less attractive to farm children”. A range of commentators observed this worrying trend.

The successor’s lack of enthusiasm for farming was quite apparent in Lobley *et al*’s (2005a) discussion of farmer’s future plans. The response from one farmer highlighted the reality of this economic misfortune on his son’s intentions, elucidating the existence of the succession crisis:

“My son was working on the farm but now he owns a business – welding and fabricating. He was at an agricultural college for two to three years and as he said ‘farming is going to be crap so I’m going to get a job’. He’s keen on farming but it was the financial side...and he was getting married. He could see no future in it.”
(Discussion Group Respondent, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 19).

More recently, in their research with farm families in Northern Ireland, Price and Conn (2012: 101), reported farmers' concerns for passing on the family farm. Concerns included 'will it be viable to provide a successor with a suitable income?', 'will it be a millstone around their neck?' and 'will they have no time off like me?'; concerns Price and Conn (2012) attribute to the realisation that the farm alone is unlikely to provide an adequate income for their successors.

Ward and Lowe (1994) assessed the link between economic trajectory of farm businesses and the commitment to family continuity. Based on the current profitability of the farm, how this had changed since the 1970s and the expectations of profitability in the near future, farms were allocated to the following derived categories (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 176):

Accumulators – Farm businesses that had a steady and often increasing profit since 1970, frequently in association with a growth in business size. Their operators were optimistic about their future.

Survivors – Farm businesses that generally made a profit but where the ability to support the family could not be automatically assumed. Profits had often declined during the mid-1980s, along with national trends, including rising levels of debt and interest charges. Many farmers had searched for new sources of income on and off the farm.

Marginalized – Businesses where profitability had been falling steadily in real terms and where, at the time of the survey, most showed little or no profit, an incapacity to reproduce themselves in the long term, and where their occupiers were pessimistic about the future. Most seemed unlikely to survive into the next generation of occupiers as an independent family business.

Using these categories, the proportion of farms where succession was planned, was examined (Table 3.5):

Table 3.5

Economic status categories and succession intentions

<i>Succession Planned?</i>	<i>Accumulators</i>	<i>Survivors</i>	<i>Marginals</i>
Yes	66%	55%	35%
No	19%	27%	52%
Don't Know	16%	19%	13%

Source: Ward and Lowe (1994)

Ward and Lowe (1994) noted how, two-thirds of farms in the 'accumulator' category anticipated succession, dropping to 55 per cent of 'survivors' and only 25 per cent of 'marginals'.

Concomitantly, the proportion of ‘accumulators’ where succession had been ruled out was just 19 per cent, rising to 27 per cent of ‘survivors’ and 52 per cent of ‘marginals’.

Although Ward and Lowe’s (1994) suggestion that economic decline, characteristic of the agricultural depression of the 1990s, has prompted a decline in commitment to family continuity is perhaps *logical*, it overlooks the complexities associated with family farming, disregarding the enduring tenacity of the family farm and ignoring the strength of the emotional attachment to the land, or as some argue, the occupation (see Blanc, 1987). Assuming such a linear relationship between the prevailing economic climate and commitment, without any empirical evidence to suggest such pattern undermines the complexities of family farm dynamics and the commitment of farm families to the occupation and their farms.

Ward and Lowe (1994: 176) recognise “an alternative explanation” for the decline in commitment to succession that “relates to social change in rural areas”. During the 1970s and 1980s, 100,000 people were recorded as migrating from urban to rural areas in the UK (Woods, 2005), thus farm families began to find themselves with neighbours with fairly different values and lifestyles (Ward and Lowe, 1994). As a result it is plausible that potential successors “have, in greater numbers, embraced the career aspirations of their new peers and rejected the more traditional family farming ethic of carrying on the farming business” (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 176). In Riley’s (2009) innovative work with farm children, the temptation of a ‘modern life’ was apparent. For example, one respondent claimed “I don’t want to spend every hour of my life farming...my grandfather never saw the sea...I want to go on holiday and stuff...you know, have a *modern life*” (Riley’s (2009: 225) Interview Respondent, Liam aged 12). Similarly, another respondent claimed “I respect what my grandfather did in building the place up...but that’s just it you know, I don’t want to do the same level of work he did...*I want to have a life*” (Riley’s (2009: 225) Interview Respondent, Joshua aged 11). Ward and Lowe (1994) note how diversification activities may have also compounded these social changes, increasing the interaction between farming families and non-farming families.

Although his discussion is limited to the specificities of the wool growing industry in Australia, which as a sector faces a unique set of economic and social challenges, Wilkinson (2012) sensitively documents the reality of these influences, by drawing on semi-structured interviews with a collection of archetypal woolgrowers. In the case of *Brian – The End of the Line Farmer*, the effects of “greater economic and social opportunities in the city” (Wilkinson, 2012: 37) were most evident. Brian, whose children had all left home to pursue careers off the farm, when asked who he thought would be running the farm in 20 years’ time, replied, “it won’t be me, I’m pretty confident in saying that. And it won’t be a member of the family, at this stage. It will be somebody else” (Wilkinson, 2012: 45). Talking about his children Brian claimed “it just became obvious that

farming wasn't an option to them, they weren't considering it as an option. I suppose, during the time that they became more aware of the farming enterprise, it was certainly performing very badly" (Wilkinson, 2012: 46).

In addition to the introduction of new values, Lobley *et al* (2005a: 30) suggest that dissatisfaction "derive[s] from farmers' perceptions of the changing population of their communities [...] in particular, the perception that 'townies' do not understand or appreciate them". One farmer stated:

"Years ago everybody had quite a good feeling about farms, a good opinion of farmers,...you'd be working away and people would come past and they'd say, 'Well I dunno, you might get that hay in before, you know, it's gonna rain tonight, you know, you'd better get them bales up.' *They* really couldn't give tuppence now, and what we do, we always, I always feel that you're under suspicion. Erm... there's never a positive attitude from *them*, it's always negative, it always appears to be negative attitude with new people to the village" (Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 30)

For Lobley *et al* (2005a: 29) this has amounted to "uneasiness with identifying one's self as a farmer":

Farmer 1: "I don't like telling people very much that I'm a farmer"

Farmer 2: "No, you tend to shut up with that now. A few years ago..."

Farmer 1: "You do. Twenty years ago you were a farmer and you were proud of it, and now, just like you say, you go there and you just keep your head down, you don't, well, unless you wanna annoy 'em."

The prevalence of this discontent amongst the farming community, as well as the troubled social context, has fuelled the belief that successors will simply not want to farm, popularising the notion that British farming is facing a crisis in succession.

Concomitantly to the aforementioned changes, "and in part as a result of such rural social change" (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 183), introduction of environmental regulation has emphasised the need for farmers to integrate greater concern for environmental risks into their everyday farming practices. In this context it is therefore important to note the influence of "the changing role of agriculture in a 'post-productivist' countryside" (Ward, 1996: 213) on potential successors' desire to take on the farm.

Slee *et al* (2006) use Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus*, understood as "a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting schemes or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2005: 14), to

illustrate how the changing role of agriculture is incompatible with farmers' ingrained productivist self-image. For Bourdieu (2005) a farmer's habitus or disposition-to-act derives from his subconscious of a long-standing ethos of 'being a farmer'. It is a 'cultivated disposition' that is "inculcated in the earliest years of life and is constantly reinforced" (Bourdieu, 1977: 14), and generates strong propensities of behaviours that are considered normal and acceptable conduct within the context of farming. According to Painter (2000), although the habitus does not wholly determine action of the farmer and farming household, it means that individuals are increasingly likely to act in specific ways, above others. Habitus attributes significance and meaning to capital; defining the image of a 'good farmer' in his/her own eyes and those of his/her peers (Shucksmith, 1993). Writing in 1993, Shucksmith notes how the preceding 50 years had been dominated by a strong productivist ethos, during which period food production was a central part of being a farmer (Shucksmith, 1993). To the non-farming observer, modern agricultural landscapes "may represent pollution, industrialisation and a degradation of the countryside aesthetic", but to a farmer it "may represent effort, triumph over land and the harnessing of nature" (Slee *et al*, 2006: 35). Thus successive attempts to encourage farmers away from traditional 'productivist' roles have been largely unsuccessful; farmers "resist[ing] change on the basis of an anticipated loss of identity or social and cultural rewards traditionally conferred through existing commercial agricultural behaviour" (Slee *et al*, 2006: 35). For many farmers many post-productivist behaviours are thus *literally* unthinkable, posing a palpable threat to a farmer's identity and the social and cultural rewards traditionally achieved through commercial agricultural practice (Burton, 2004). The dissatisfaction with contemporary farming is typified by a lowland farmer in Lobley *et al*'s (2005a: 28) research:

"Well you don't need to be a farmer you just need to do the paperwork and fill out the forms [...] So I think farming really is just an on-going joke – park keeping really"

Slee *et al* (2006: 29) suggest that "Bourdieu's conception of habitus, as something that changes but slowly, if at all, provides a convenient peg on which to hang the apparent reluctance of farmers to alter farming systems or styles". In other words, the behaviour necessary to obtain economic rewards under post-productive imperatives are not only incompatible with that necessary to earn social honour and prestige, ultimately, it goes against the grain of their *habitus*, appearing to be instinctively wrong. As a result "farmers' status, expressive enjoyment and even mental health are threatened [...] leading farmers increasingly to question their own self-worth" (Shucksmith and Hermann, 2002: 41). Potential successors are likely to be aware of this discontent, particularly given that "the dominant modes of thought and experience [...] are internalised by individuals, especially in their early years" (Shucksmith and Hermann, 2002: 39), with palpable implications for successors' career aspirations and intentions.

However, it is imperative to note that economic, social and regulatory changes are merely *conditions* conducive with a crisis in succession and are not, in themselves, evincing a crisis. Ward and Lowe's (1994), and later Ward's (1996) belief that "commitment to family succession in farming is becoming less relevant" (Ward and Lowe, 1994: 183) is not empirically supported, instead they merely *assume* under these conditions that a crisis in succession would have been inevitable. By arriving at this conclusion, Ward and Lowe ignore a longstanding research tradition that has highlighted the tenacity of the farm family and their compulsion to 'keep the name on the land' despite unfavourable exogenous conditions. Although the austere economic circumstances, the challenging social context and incompatibility of current agricultural practices with farmers' identities, naturally pose a threat to farming's 'appeal' to the next generation, and has understandably given some weight to the belief that successors will simply not want to farm, the notion that British farming is facing a crisis in succession has gathered *unwarranted* pace.

3.1.2 What Crisis?

Despite widespread assumptions that British farming was facing a succession crisis, Williams and Farrington (2006: 2) state, "there is however some debate as to whether there is a 'shortage' of new entrants" and empirical investigation has prompted many commentators to suggest "crisis may be too strong a word" (Lobley, 2010: 15). A significant body of evidence dismisses this crisis, pointing instead to "relatively high rates of succession and hints at the ongoing persistence and tenacity of family farmers" (Lobley, 2010: 9). Although in Lobley *et al*'s (2002) study of the implications of changes in the structure of agricultural business, found that only 33 per cent of respondents had identified a successor to continue the business and this rate increased significantly with age. For example, 45 per cent of those aged 55-65 and 60 per cent of those aged 65 and over, reported having identified a successor (Figure 3.3). A total of only 5 per cent of the farmers from the six diverse study areas of the UK anticipated leaving farming in the coming 5 years *without* a successor.

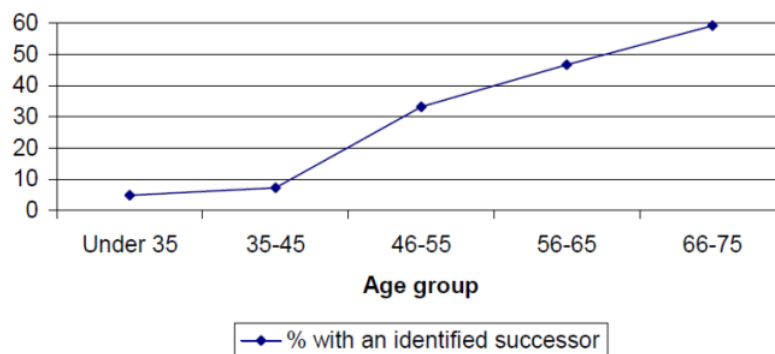


Figure 3.3 Relationship between identification of a successor and age of respondent (*Source: Lobley 2010*)

The FMD outbreak in 2001/2002 and later, the 2003 CAP reforms understood as “the most significant change in the CAP since its inception” (Lobley and Butler, 2010: 341), revived this notion that British farmers were battling unrelenting market forces and declining agricultural income, prompting the ‘crisis of succession’ to remerge in the academic lexicon. However, building directly on their earlier work (Lobley *et al*, 2002), using the same six study areas, Lobley *et al* (2005a) found that 60 per cent of respondents intended to maintain control of their current farm in the next five years, whilst 18 per cent had planned to semi- or fully retire in favour of a successor, strongly dismissing anecdotal concerns of the crisis of succession. The increase in the rate of succession expectation, as demonstrated by the sequential research of Lobley *et al* (Table 3.6) not only reflects the increase associated with the ageing of the respondents, but more importantly, indicates the rates of anticipation rising for *all* age groups. Critically, it denotes “a strengthening of commitment on the part of the farmers themselves to remain on the land” (Lobley, 2010: 10), *despite* the difficulties the industry faced.

Table 3.6

Identification of a successor

	2002	2005
Percentage of respondents who had identified a successor	33	56
Percentage of respondents over 65 who had identified a successor	60	80

Source: Adapted from Lobley *et al* (2002) and Lobley *et al* (2005a)

Internationally too, Lobley *et al* (2010: 53) used the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey data to dispel the crisis of succession, claiming that “England has a higher rate of succession selection compared with Canada, Australia, and several U.S. states” (Figure 3.4).

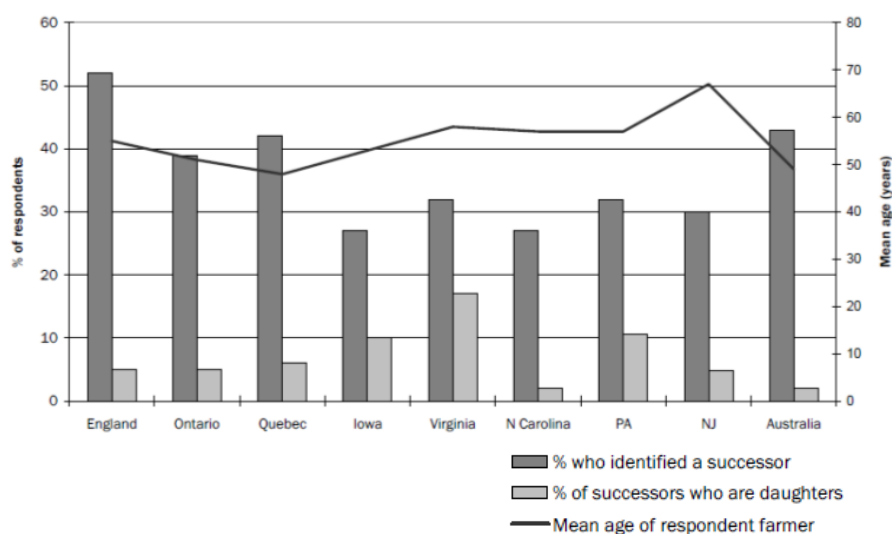


Figure 3.4 Identification of a successor: some international comparisons Source: Lobley (2010)

Later in 2006, Lobley, Butler and Winter completed a postal survey of 1852 farmers in South West England (see Lobley, 2010), revealed that anticipated rates of succession on farms operated by farmers in their 60s were “only marginally lower than rates recorded by the English *FARMTRANSFERS* surveys in the 1990s” (Lobley, 2010: 11). Although the data is geographically limited and becoming increasingly dated (Lobley, 2010), quantitatively, the figures are difficult to contest; the “overall picture of the entry and exit situation of UK farming is one of relative stability” (ADAS *et al*, 2004: 54).

3.1.3 The ‘True’ and ‘Multiple’ Crises of Succession

Despite a throng of evidence that dismisses the (numerical) crisis in succession, Lobley (2010: 15) recognises “high rates of succession alone cannot secure the future of British agriculture”. For Lobley (2010), whilst ‘crisis’ may be too strong a word, he believes there are other important questions to be answered regarding succession.

Firstly, the ‘farmer’s boy problem’ is particularly disconcerting given its prevalence in England and its potential to “reduce the next generation’s motivation, confidence and competence to make decisions” (Hastings, 2004: 1). Using the *FARMTRANSFERS* database, Lobley (2010) demonstrates the prevalence of the ‘farmer’s boy problem’ in England compared to other countries. As demonstrated in Table 3.7, along with Austria, Germany and North Carolina, England has the highest proportion of successors pursuing this route.

Table 3.7
Occupation of identified successors aged 16 or over

	England	Ontario	Quebec	Iowa	North Carolina	Penn-NJ	Austria	Germany
	<i>percentage</i>							
Farmer’s Boy	32.3	8.8	7.7	9.3	37.2	3.7	36.4	29.1
Partnership	3.7	7.0	3.9	4.7	3.0	1.7	6.7	5.1
Separate Enterprise								
<i>High Autonomy</i>	21.7	19.9	20.3	5.8	2.1	9.1	6.1	24.6
<i>Low Autonomy</i>	22.4	9.1	25.5	5.8	10.2	19.1	12.1	19.4

Source: *FARMTRANSFERS* Database (Lobley, 2010)

Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 42) claim “what constitutes a ‘farmer’s boy’ is open to debate”, claiming firstly, the ‘farmer’s boy problem’ does not give enough consideration to the successor’s age, purporting if a successor is still very young, the lack of managerial control is merely indicative of their age; simply “the delegation process has not yet started”. Secondly, for Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 42), if a successor is perhaps pursuing some off-farm work and is working on the farm only part-time, it is “natural that the delegation process is delayed”. This dissatisfaction leads Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 42) refine Errington (2002) ‘farmer’s boy’ by outlining the following criteria:

- (1) The successor's criteria are all satisfied;
- (2) The successor is involved in farming at the home farm on a fulltime basis;
- (3) The degree of delegation is lower than that of younger successors (aged 20-29) in each country.

Despite restricting their criteria for the 'farmer's boy', Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 42) support the earlier findings Errington and Lobley (2002), stating that "among these countries, England stands out because of its much higher proportion of 'farmer's boy' successors"; specifically, one out of six successors who were 35 years old or older, and one out of five full-time farming successors in the same age category were classified as a 'farmer's boy' (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8

Occupation of identified successors aged 35 or over

	Japan	USA: Iowa	USA: Virginia	England	Canada: Ontario	Canada: Quebec
	<i>percentage</i>					
Full-time on this farm	8.2	29.8	16.2	75.5	50.0	71.4
Farmer's boy	0.7	6.4	7.4	17.0	2.4	7.1
Not a farmer's boy	7.5	23.4	8.8	58.5	47.6	64.3

Source: FARMTRANSFERS Database (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008)

Lobley (2010) also asks "does the data presented here suggest that the 'closed shop' which concerned The Northfield Committee (1979) 30 years ago is today a barrier to development and innovation in the farm sector?" (see Section 3.0.1 for a more detailed discussion of the 'closed shop' in agriculture).

This highlights the need to engage beyond the numerical crisis of succession and reveals some of the issues concealed behind the 'picture of relative stability' (ADAS *et al*, 2004) that potentially threaten the ability of British agriculture to respond to future challenges.

3.1.4 The Absence of the Potential Successor

Although in the concluding statements of his paper for The Oxford Farming Conference in 2010, Lobley (2010: 14) confidently dismisses the crisis of succession stating that "English farming does not, at present, face a crisis of succession", he also suggests "to what degree this sentiment is shared by [farmers'] children and potential successors is less clear" (Lobley, 2010: 11). For example one respondent interviewed in Lobley *et al*'s (2005a) research contests the apparent stability of anticipated succession rates:

"I can't help feeling that the current generation of people who are working on the farms will sort of go. I'm 55 and that great flush of people who were really enthusiastic... about agriculture... and my sons aren't. I've got three sons under

eighteen and they aren't really interested, they see the farm as somewhere to get a bit of pocket money from but they don't see it as a way of life" (Discussion Group Respondent, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 20)

The literature surrounding the succession crisis has simply failed to adequately confirm or deny the existence of a 'crisis', because of insufficient engagement with the potential successor.

It is important at this point to highlight that 'the successor' is a broad catch-all term that often conflates those who *have* succeeded to the farm and those that *could* in the future, inherent to the "complexities of the succession process" (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 290). At this stage in the discussion it is important to specify it is the 'potential successor', who may succeed to the farm in the future, which is of particular interest. A more detailed discussion of the terminology and a formal definition of the 'potential successor' is offered in Chapter 4.

The failures of the literature expose a significant omission; the absence of the potential successor, not just from our prediction of the number of willing next generation farmers but also with regards to our understanding of the transfer arrangement.

The 'cultural turn' of the late 1980s/early 1990s (Morris and Evans, 2004), steered many researchers towards engaging with a number of previously neglected 'hidden others' in geographical research (see Milbourne, 1997). For example, Sarah James' (1990: 278) paper on the 'place' of children in geography, directly responds to what she describes as their exclusion in geographical study, which had previously "been dominated by the study of 'man'". In keeping with wider efforts to unveil and engage with heterogeneity at the time, James made an effective appeal to the academic community to "view the reality through the eyes of *both* children and adults", claiming that "to do otherwise is remain half blind" (1990: 283). The absence of the potential successor highlighted here resonates with James' suggestions; our understanding of intergenerational farm transfer is hugely debilitated by the exclusion of the potential successor.

Also steered by the 'cultural turn' and the associated dissatisfaction with what Cloke (2006) later terms the 'Mr Average' approach to rural study, Philo's (1992) plea to give much needed attention to 'neglected rural geographies', spawned significant interest into gender and sexuality, and later childhood and youth in the rural domain (see Cloke, 1997; Little, 1999; Jones, 1997).

Riley (2009) responds to this calls from the agricultural sub-field, associated with the 'cultural turn' in his research with farm children, which went some way to unveiling previously hidden narratives and revealing the heterogeneity of farming communities. He rightly observed how, despite welcomed engagement with rural youth, "*children on farms* have remained relatively under investigated" (Riley, 2009: 245, emphasis added). Although the potential successor is not always a child or young person, for example in the case of Riley's (2009) work he specifically defines

‘children’ as 7-11 year olds and ‘young people’ as 11-15 year olds, much of his discussion is applicable to the subsumption of the successor in academic research (which of course can include children and young people too). In his shrewd critique of farm children’s geographies, Riley (2009) states how farm children have merely featured in academic research as marginal figures discussed as part of farm labour (Gasson and Errington, 1993) or as possible successors to the farm (Potter and Lobley, 1996a). Most damningly, like the farm child, the successor is the subject of “passing references, most commonly framed through the words of parents” (Riley, 2009: 246). The following example, taken from Lobley *et al*’s (2005a) work provides a prime example:

“My son was working on the farm but now he owns a business... He was at an agricultural college for two to three years and as he said ‘farming is going to be crap so I’m going to get a job’. He’s keen on farming but it was the financial side... He could see no future in it” (Discussion Group Respondent, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 19)

Further examples of this reliance on the farmer and neglect of the potential successor are evident in Wheeler *et al*’s (2012: 271) work in Australia.

“My oldest son is thinking about it, but the way water allocations are at the moment, he and I are not sure it would be a good business investment?”

“My children believe it is too hard: physically, mentally and financially.”

“Young Australian kids just do not want to know how to grow things!”

Here, the tendency “to focus on adult reflections on both their own childhood and as spokesperson for the experiences of their children” (Riley, 2009: 247) is patently clear.

Lobley *et al* (2005a) are reliant on the farmer as the ‘spokesperson’ for the potential successor; enervating the reliability of any conclusions made regarding the strength of familial commitment to farming from this statement.

Price and Conn’s (2012) findings exemplify the problems of reliance on ‘the farmer’ as a spokesperson for the experiences of the successor, revealing a noteworthy discrepancy between the attitudes of the farmer and the (potential) successor. They observed how “the pull just to ‘keep going’ [...] appears to be a key concern for potential successors” but was frequently and strongly “discouraged by the older generation” (Price and Conn, 2012: 152); a discrepancy they attribute to farming men becoming ‘jaded’ by the difficulties of the farming lifestyle, dissatisfied by the increasing workload, loss of workers and dwindling financial return. This experience is likely to bias their outlook and potentially obscure the true feelings and intentions of the successor, who as shown by Price and Conn (2012: 102), have remained decidedly keen and “*still* have the enthusiasm to be part of the family’s rootedness”.

Although the above quote from the Discussion Group Respondent (Lobley *et al*, 2005a), provides a prime example, the reliance on ‘the farmer’ is not limited to Lobley *et al* (2005a); an extensive literature review has revealed the almost complete lack of *explicit engagement* with the potential successor. As demonstrated in Table 3.9, which summarises the methodology of the key research in the field, little succession research has *unequivocally* sought the voice of the potential successor.

Although a lot of the listed work does refer directly to the potential successor, for example, *FARMTRANSFERS* survey asked farmers “to indicate if a number of specific decisions are made by the farmer alone, shared with the successor, or made by the successor alone” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 53), the survey was ultimately completed by the person responsible for most day-to-day decision making.

Whilst the early work of Hastings (1984) and the recent work of Price (2010) and Price and Conn (2012) specifically targeted potential successors, as well as work by ADAS *et al* (2004) who targeted past students of Agricultural Colleges and Universities (many of whom were likely to have been potential successors) provide welcome exceptions to this claim, the paucity of true and explicit engagement with the potential successor remains a valid and disconcerting observation.

As a result, almost our entire understanding of the succession process hinges on the interpretation of principal farmer, who acts as “the spokesperson for all the individuals hidden behind the family façade” (Price and Evans, 2006: 3), meaning the successor continues to lurk in the shadows of academic research; silent and subsumed.

Although the successor can sometimes be a more distant relative, it is nearly always the farmer’s child (Potter and Lobley, 1996a). As a result of the ‘cultural turn’ and calls from both rural geographers more generally, as well as those in the agricultural subfield (Morris and Evans, 2004), Riley responds to explicit calls to engage with the agricultural ‘others’, rather than simply the ‘principal’ (typically male) farmer, as had so typically been the case, by interviewing farmers’ children.

Riley (2009: 254) notes how, *even from a young age*, the potential successor is a strategic and reflective actor, that rather than blindly following their parents, may often pursue alternative and new pathways. For example, Riley (2009: 255) noted how one respondent, Liam, aged only 15, boldly spoke of his intentions, claiming “when I take over I’m going to put all the cows on slats, so that we don’t have to spend all our time mucking out”. In addition, rather than being something that waited until they were older and in control of the farm to exercise, Riley (2009) revealed how intergenerationality is essentially two-directional, in that even as children, successors can categorically impact on parental decision-making, ranging from the decision to take a holiday, to management and investment decisions. By showing, *even as a child*, the potential successor is a

powerful, proficient and autonomous actor, it demonstrates how the exclusion of the potential successor is incredibly debilitating.

Elsewhere in the agricultural restructuring literature, it has been periodically documented that sustained economic downturn endured by British farmers has failed to erode farmers' strong commitment to the industry and intentions to remain in farming. However, research has revealed that these adaptive strategies have come at significant (yet hidden) cost for farmers and farming families. For example Reed *et al* (2002: vi) observe how "many [farmers] have withdrawn from social contacts as part of a strategy of working longer, harder hours in order to survive". Just as the stable number of family farms has disguised the adaptive strategies adopted by farming families, the constant rates of succession is potentially concealing important narratives and dialogues associated with the succession process that has been exacerbated by the dominance of broad surveys (as shown in Table 3.9), such as the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey and subsequent lack of engagement with the successor. In her work with Welsh farming families, Price (2010) touched on the intense pressure and emotional difficulty experienced by farmers facing the decision to take on the farm. Rhodri, an established farmer, nearing his sixties, remembered feeling "*I have to carry on – I have the responsibility to my father and grandfather*" (Interview Respondent, Price, 2010: 88, emphasis added). As a result of intense hardship faced by their predecessors, Price (2010: 89) notes how the decision to succeed to the farm presents the potential heir "with a massive and distressing burden that they often struggle with". Not only does this divulge some of the narratives and experiences that have been concealed behind the 'picture of relative stability' that warrant further investigation, simultaneously it exemplifies a fundamental flaw with academic understanding of the succession process; namely the reliance on adult reflections on their own experiences (Riley, 2009).

Although the work of Riley (2009), Price (2010) and Price and Conn (2012), influenced by the 'cultural turn', have made important headway in uncovering the heterogeneity of the farming community by engaging with various farming 'others', more work is needed to improve understanding of the complexities of intergenerational farm transfer and more generally the complexities of the agrarian sector. To this end, inclusion of the potential successor in this research is informed by the desire to give a polyvocal and thus more informed account of succession issues in the farming community. A range of more in-depth and rigorous approaches are now fundamental to unveil these concealed narratives and give an all-important voice to the potential successor; aspects that have sometimes been disguised by broad surveys and a failure on the part of researchers, to engage potential successors.

Table 3.9

The succession literature – overview of research methods

Research	Data Collection Method	Subject(s) targeted Successor(s)	Year
Hastings (1984)	<i>Interviews and surveys</i> with twenty-five farmers and thirty-six sons.	Principal farmer	
Hutson (1987)	‘Full’ <i>interviews</i> with 50 farmers.	Principal farmer	1980-1981
Errington and Tranter (1991)	<i>Postal survey</i> in England, France, Ontario and Quebec	Principal farmer	Early 1990s
Blanc and Perrier-Cornet (1993)	Data from the Farm Accounting Data Network (from EC Member states) and 120 ‘in-depth studies’ of European family farms	Principal farmer Farm family	
Potter and Lobley (1992a)	165 farm <i>surveys</i> , in England and Wales	Principal farmer	1990
Potter and Lobley (1992b)			
Ward and Lowe (1994)	University College London <i>surveys</i> 420 farms across five study areas in the mid-1980s. Data from <i>interviews</i> with 60 dairy farmers in Devon and a further 63 in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in the early 1990s.	Principal farmer	Early 1990s
Potter and Lobley (1996a)	504 <i>interviews</i> with farmers carried out in 1993	Principal farmer	1993
Potter and Lobley (1996b)	92 case study <i>interviews</i> , which <i>sometimes</i> included the successor		
Errington (1998)	<i>Postal survey</i> in England, France, Ontario and Quebec	Principal farmer	Early 1990s
Lobley <i>et al</i> (2002)	Between 26 and 50 <i>telephone surveys</i> with farmers in each of the 6 study areas	Principal farmer	Early 2000s
Errington (2002)	FARMTRANSFERS international <i>postal survey</i>	Principal farmer	1991-2010
ADAS <i>et al</i> (2004)	<i>Telephone survey</i> of 1,028 farmers <i>Postal survey</i> of 492 agricultural college graduates <i>Telephone interviews</i> of new entrants 229	Principal farmer, including new entrants College leavers	
Lobley <i>et al</i> (2005a)	A total of 80 face-to-face <i>interviews</i> with farmers across 6 study areas	Principal farmer	2005
Sottomayor <i>et al</i> (2008)	4,600 <i>postal surveys</i> across Germany, UK and Portugal	Principal farmer	
Calus and Van Huylenbroeck (2008)	Data from the Belgian Farm Accounting Data from 716 farms	Principal farmer	
Calus <i>et al</i> (2008)			
Uchiyama <i>et al</i> (2008)	FARMTRANSFERS international <i>postal survey</i>	Principal farmer	1991-2010
Lobley <i>et al</i> (2010)	FARMTRANSFERS international <i>postal survey</i>	Principal farmer	1991-2010
Lobley (2010)	FARMTRANSFERS international <i>postal survey</i>	Principal farmer	1991-2010
Inwood and Sharp (2012)	Face-to-face <i>semi-structured interviews</i> with 33 farm families	Farm family	
Price (2010)	Five <i>life-history interviews</i> with 25 different family members.	Farm family including 3 successors	
Price and Conn (2012)	<i>Open-ended postal surveys</i> from 113 farmers and 75 successors and 5 ‘follow up’ <i>interviews</i> with farmers and successors	Principal farmer Successor(s)	

Although a clear and debilitating caveat in succession literature, it is important to consider the propensity to focus on the incumbent farmer and thus the exclusion of the successor is, in part, the unintended product of the methodological challenges inherent to family farm research. With data collection methods typically including postal questionnaires, aimed, for simplicity/brevity and in the interests of response rates, at the ‘person in charge of the day-to-day decision making on the farm’, as well as the absence of a clear definition of who the successor is, the succession research field has unintentionally excluded the successor voice. Although an explicable issue, it still leaves a large lacuna that has been highlighted and will be addressed in this research.

3.1.5 The Faint Voice of the Successor

Influenced by the ‘agri-cultural turn’ (Morris and Evans, 2004), Price and Conn (2012) targeted both farmers and potential successors in their research into intergenerational farm transfer, grounded in their appreciation of the ‘diverse identities’ and ‘subjective performance’ associated with farming and farm families. Price and Conn (2012) provide one of the few exceptional examples to unequivocally engage with the potential successor (see also Hastings, 1984). Despite successors’ acute awareness of the challenging economic conditions and associated difficulties of farming in Northern Ireland, a total of 57 per cent claimed they had decided they wanted to go into farming before they had even left school, prompting Price and Conn (2012) to ask *why* potential successors would wish to succeed in such unfavourable conditions. Their findings revealed an incontestable attachment to the land and lifestyle, with many respondents referring to their enjoyment of farming, the outdoors and working with animals.

Price and Conn (2012: 105) conclude “there appears to be something about growing up on the farm that leads men to often imbue a sense of pride of being born to farm, a sense of destiny, or it being in their blood” something that “is clearly hard to pull away from” despite increasing hardships of the lifestyle. By targeting potential successors and drawing on *their* opinions and attitudes, Price and Conn (2012) justifiably dismiss the succession crisis in a way that broad surveys, targeted at farm principals, are unable to do with much standing, because they marginalise the potential successor. Although their results are substantiated, they admit “of course the respondents had all stayed in farming and research with those who have chosen to leave [...] is required” (Price and Conn, 2012: 105), so despite providing a much needed and illuminating start, further work is required to allow a more holistic understanding of the existence of a next generation.

3.2 The Renaissance in Agriculture – ‘What an opportunity for farmers!’

“The economic, social and environmental setting for farming businesses has changed dramatically in the last three decades, with consequential impacts on farming and family farming” (Whitehead,

Lobley and Baker, 2012: 215). Although it appears that the demand from family members to succeed to the farm has remained unwavering, it is thought that the steady decline in farming incomes, worsening public perception of farmers, continued migration of incomers into rural areas and the buoyancy of alternative sectors are likely to have “tempted, ‘might have been’ successors, away from the farming business” (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 215). The appeal of farming to the young mind has been threatened by “the attractions of alternatives, more obvious now than ever, through media and internet” (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 215).

However, even a cursory trawl through the contemporary agricultural media renders an undeniable feeling of excitement and anticipation. Farming is most definitely back on the agenda. In 2010, internationally renowned Professor David Hughes of Imperial College London, noted “I can’t help noticing farmers are back in fashion!”, describing farming’s new position as far removed from that as recent as five years ago. He notes how “in a surprisingly wide range of countries around the globe, I see farmers being featured on supermarket shelves, and in national advertisements for major food brands” (Hughes, 2010), citing Warburton’s, the sliced bread market leader, as an example.

It is frequently documented that the next generation of farmers will need to be extremely motivated, technically skilled and highly attuned to the plethora of complex challenges that face agriculture as we move forward towards 2050 (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012). Speaking at the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) forum in Torquay in April 2012, Jonny Williams, Wales YFC Rural Affairs vice chairman noted the new demands on agriculturalists, who will “have to be economists, commodity traders and current affair specialists. They need to know of the latest disease challenges and chemical resistances, of weather patterns in Argentina, Ukraine and New Zealand, of demographics in China, India and Africa, not to mention the national debts of our European colleagues” (Farmers Weekly, 2012a). Likewise, Meruig Raymond, the then NFU deputy president and chair to the Agriskills Strategy made a series of enthusiastic claims (Farmers Guardian, 2011):

“If you go back 10 years, it was far more sexy for people to go into the City and other profession, but there is a much bigger appetite to go into farming now.”

“The debate has moved on, where food security and the need to produce more food has come to the fore, particularly following the publication of the Foresight report.”

“The image has changed. Combine harvesters are worth £250,000, tractors £100,000 and a herd of cattle about £200,000. That is a lot of capital investment and a lot of responsibility.”

In Ireland, youth organisation Macra na Feirme have recently reported how farmers are rapidly moving back up the list of Ireland's most eligible bachelors! Alan Jagoe, Macra president stated how "seven or eight years ago, if someone asked you in a nightclub what you did for a living, they would run a mile if you said you were a farmer [...] that's all changed – now they would nearly queue up for a farmer" (Independent, 2011).

Succession, which is "strongly rooted in agriculture's 'productivist' rationale", is likely to have suffered during the post-productivist period (Ward, 1996: 210). Although the idea of a simplistic dichotomous transition was soon understood as nothing more than 'academic fantasy' (Lobley and Winter, 2009), reduced state market intervention, greater restrictions on agriculture, reduced intensity of farming, diversification of income sources and an increased emphasis on environmental conservation that characterised the period would have undoubtedly jeopardised "the appeal of farming to the young mind" (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 216). However, many commentators are beginning to recognise that "productivism [...] is making somewhat of a comeback" (Burton and Wilson, 2012: 54). New-productivism (Lobley and Winter, 2009) or neo-productivism (Burton and Wilson, 2012) which refers to "an accumulative and intensive production ideology *within* a multifunctional regime" (Burton and Wilson, 2012: 56, emphasis added), is assuming its place at the forefront of the political agenda, where it is "being enthusiastically embraced by farmers and their advisors" (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 216) and realigning succession with its 'productivist roots': at last "farmers, as producers of food and fuel in a dangerous world, are being valued once again" (Andersons Agricultural Consultants, 2007, cited in Lobley and Winter, 2009: 2). Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012) cite how in the US, programs that match beginning farmers with existing farmers, report that they have approximately 20 potential beginning farmers for every existing farmer, reflecting how in reality, this new order is being embraced by farmers.

In their ground-breaking discussion, Fish *et al* (2013: 40) believe "agricultural uses of land are key contexts in which emerging agendas for food security will find their material expression, yet we know *very little* about how these agendas are being understood by farming publics". They describe the absence of farmer voices from current engagement 'striking' and "given that the productive resources so essential to a sustainable food supply are in farmers' hands, potentially worrying" (40). Critically, Fish *et al* (2013) recognise the farmer voice as an essential but neglected presence within the food security agenda and endeavour to examine how the emerging contours of the food security agenda are being understood and interpreted in the context of the everyday realities of farming. In contrast to the untainted optimism that dominates the contemporary media, Fish *et al* (2013) reported mixed feelings from farmers regarding their future in the context of the food security agenda, with many negative precedents expressed to forge the argument that, "we ought to keep the price up by low production" (Fish *et al*, 2013: 46):

“We’ve been there before – ‘Food from our own resources’ – the seventies. We upped food production to round about 70% to 80%. What we got from that was a massive overproduction, a downturn in price and huge turnout of the industry...[]...you know, when I first became a student dairying, we had 135,000 dairy farmers. I am not a dairy farmer any more but I bet we haven’t even got – you know – I bet we haven’t 35,000 – I bet we haven’t even twenty [thousand]. And that was the result of producing more food.”

Although the new order has been colloquially depicted as an exciting opportunity for the farming community, it will ultimately demand *even* more from farmers in an increasingly constrained context. Furthermore, there is already speculation amongst the farming community that the food security agenda will “not automatically translate into a situation of long term economic prosperity for farmers” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 46).

In addition to the negativity surrounding the term, Fish *et al* (2013) note how many farmers did not understand the term food security in terms of the increased demand for food in the context of global demographic trends and patterns of economic development. They noted instead how, “somewhat surprisingly, [...] the most frequently occurring approach to the term food security revealed by the survey was based on issues of food safety, quality and traceability, with just over 35% of farmers responding in this way” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 43). For example:

“Food produced that is safe and healthy for people to eat” (Survey Participant, Fish *et al*, 2013: 43)

“Good quality food and safe to eat and traceable” (Survey Participant, Fish *et al*, 2013: 43)

Both the negativity and the misunderstanding/misinterpretation of the term, as observed by Fish *et al* (2013), suggests the farming community are ultimately not connecting with this idea to the extent that has been broadly anticipated.

Although, their research brings much needed attention to the farming community, and although potential successors were present at the open deliberative polling event, the mean age of the survey respondents was 57, and over 80 per cent of deliberative polling respondents aged over 50, many of whom, it is not overly contentious to suggest, may not be farming when these agendas are fully realised. So although, by the inclusion of the farming community, Fish *et al* make important headway in academic discussion of food security, an explicit understanding of how, arguably the most significant actor – the next generation of farmers – are interpreting this imperative, is yet to be sufficiently developed.

3.2.1 The Impacts of the Renaissance in Agriculture

Crucially, Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012: 235) suggest, what they have dubbed the *renaissance in agriculture*, “will undoubtedly *influence* the minds of potential successors”, therefore it is an understanding of this *influence* on the minds of potential successors that is worryingly absent from academic discussion. Although Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012) rightfully ask how the *renaissance in agriculture* will influence the potential successor, which refreshingly highlights the successor as an important and integral actor in the context of food security, it is yet to be empirically investigated and currently, *nothing* is known about how potential successors are speaking to this emergent agenda.

In the context of the impending food security agenda, Leach (2012: 206) optimistically suggests how “the next generation in a family business have a unique opportunity to build a challenging and enriching career for themselves”. Although numbers of successors have remained steady enough to dismiss the crisis of succession in the UK, research has seldom found rates of succession exceeding 65 per cent, averaging around 52 per cent (Table 3.10). Now farming is supposedly ‘back in fashion’ (Hughes, 2010), can we expect the percentage of identified successors to noticeably increase? Or will changes be less obvious? Perhaps for previously ‘obliging’ successors, motivated by a moral obligation to their predecessors, the food security agenda may provide a newfound motivation for succeeding to the farm? Will the new order mean leaving the farm to their children is no longer understood as a ‘form of child abuse’ (Kaine *et al*, 1997)?

Table 3.10

Percentage of UK farms with identified successors as observed by previous research

Research	%
FARMTRANSFERS (1991) (see Errington and Tranter, 1991)	50
Potter and Lobley (1992a; 1992b)	53.3
Marsden, Munton and Ward (1992)	66
Ward and Lowe (1994)	62.7
Potter and Lobley (1996a; 1996b)	28.7
FARMTRANSFERS (1997) (see Lobley <i>et al</i> , 2010)	52.8
Lobley <i>et al</i> (2002)	33
Lobley <i>et al</i> (2005a)	56
Sottomayor <i>et al</i> (2008)	60.8
Price and Conn (2012)	57

3.2.2 The Importance of the Successor – Some Concluding Thoughts

Implicit in the author’s recommendation to engage with ‘the successor’ is their irrefutable importance. Just as James (1990: 279) claimed in her case for the inclusion of children in Geography, “today’s children are tomorrow’s adults”, today’s successors are tomorrow’s farmers. If that alone fails to justify their inclusion in academic research, it will be *these* farmers that will

assume the frontline role in the delivery of crucial food security goals. It is not too contentious to suggest, never has the next generation of farmers been so imperative. As aptly stated by Potter and Lobley (1996a: 305) “in the patterns of succession today can be read the shape of farming futures to come”; the intentions of potential successors, and the transfer arrangements, in place now will undoubtedly shape farming futures, both whilst they progress towards succeeding and after. As already stated, the author champions the importance of *effective succession*, including the presence of a successor and the efficient transfer of management control to the successor. Given the benefits of effective succession, as widely accepted in the literature, and its potential importance to the delivery of the food security agenda, an accurate understanding of the feelings, attitudes and behavioural intentions of potential successors is paramount, but at the moment resoundingly absent.

3.3 Creation of the Research Objectives: Lessons from the Literature Review

It is from the issues and questions arising from the preceding review of the literature that the specific research objectives were developed (Table 1.1).

Before introducing the theoretical and conceptual aspects underpinning this research, with reference to the key issues, debates and questions that emerged in the above literature review, in the interests of clarity, this section explains *how* and *why* these specific objectives were developed and pursued.

1. To understand how and why succession has shaped land occupancy

It is clear from the discussion that succession is imperative in family farming (Price and Conn, 2012), with considerable evidence suggesting farming continues to be one of the most hereditary professions, with surveys consistently identifying over 80 per cent of farms are established family units (Lobley *et al*, 2002; Price and Conn, 2012; Lobley *et al*, 2010). Effort is required to further develop our understanding of exactly how hereditary farming continues to be, and help verify (or challenge) the rates that dominate current understanding. Furthermore, as suggested by Lobley *et al* (2010) in Section 2.0, the prominence of succession alone, warrants further engagement. As presented in Section 2.1, there are numerous and sometimes competing suggestions as to exactly why farming is, and remains, despite hardship and difficulty, so hereditary. Further research is necessary to create a clearer understanding of the ‘something’ about growing up on the farm (Price and Conn, 2012) that is so hard to pull away from.

As well as contributing to a continually developing body of understanding, given the importance of the past to shaping farmer behaviour (Gill, 2013), an understanding of how and why succession has previously shaped the occupancy of participating farms provides a useful (and arguably

essential) context in which to explore contemporary succession issues, which the literature suggests, are likely to be rooted in the farm family history.

2. *To add to and develop the body of knowledge relating to farm succession by exploring:*

a. *... the impact of succession status on farmers' attitudes and behaviours*

As clear in the literature, succession status is a key factor in influencing farmer behaviour. As empirically demonstrated the *succession effect* is associated with a wealth of positive behaviours (Potter and Lobley, 1992a; 1992b; 1996a; 1996b; Calus and Van Hylenbroeck, 2008; Calus *et al*, 2008; Inwood and Sharp, 2012), and more specifically, succession status has also been linked to farmer response to policy reform (Winter, 2000; Viaggi *et al*, 2011; Sottomayor *et al*, 2011). Whilst further effort is required to generally deepen our understanding of this complex aspect of farmer behaviour, particularly in the form of qualitative research methods, given the dominance of large postal surveys in this field (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008), moreover, the impact of succession status, is, as Lobley *et al* (2010) suggest, relevant to the industry's ability to respond to the 'challenges of the future'. Thus, and as is a core argument threaded throughout this research, in the context of rising to the food security challenge, we can undoubtedly "derive benefit from the so-called 'succession effect'" (Lobley, 2010: 60), making an understanding of these effects, in the context of the challenges facing the industry, an important and as yet, under-investigated, area.

b. *... the successor routes in place*

As highlighted in the preceding literature review, despite the prevalence of succession as a means of farm transfer "very little is known about the actual process of succession" (Lobley and Baker, 2012: 3) giving the initial impetus for this objective. Furthermore, the successor routes in place for potential successors also have, in a similar way to the *succession effect*, potential to shape the industry's ability to respond to meet the demands of a growing population and associated challenges. Of specific concern here are issues such as the *farmer's boy* problem, where the potential successor is largely excluded from managerial tasks during the life of the farmer, rendering them ill-equipped to run the farm when the farmer eventually dies or is incapacitated. A contemporary understanding of both the prevalence and reality of this problem, is much needed, particularly with suggestions from the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey that the *farmer's boy* problem was particularly prevalent in England (Errington and Lobley, 2002) and the emerging debate surrounding the capabilities of the *farmers boy*, which Steiger *et al* (2012) suggest might have been underestimated by Gasson and Errington's original typology.

Although the evidence presented and reviewed in this chapter, clearly denotes the existence of a 'ladder' of increasing responsibility which potential successors typically ascend before succeeding

to the farm, Lobley (2010) asserts that existing evidence is problematic, confined to certain parts of the country and now, dated, prompting the need for further, contemporary investigation.

3. *To understand the intentions of potential successors and to understand what influences their intentions*

Having established the benefits of successor identification, and in response to the (albeit, mainly colloquial) concern regarding the existence of a next generation (see National Westminster Bank, 1992; Ward and Lowe, 1994; Ward 1996), and more recent concern over the failure of farmers to encourage their children into farming (Wheeler *et al*, 2012; Price and Conn, 2012), it becomes necessary to ask, particularly as we move towards 2050, ‘do we have a next generation of familial successors?’.

Although Lobley remedies calls of a ‘crisis in succession’ with a wealth of empirical data, showing we have (or at least *had*, in view of the dates of the data collection her refers to) a next generation of familial successors, the review of this evidence has highlighted the absence of the potential successor’s voice from this research, with methods relying on the principal farmer to speak *for* the potential successor. This exclusion raises numerous issues, including, the accuracy of our previous understandings of succession status and has thus prompted this aspect of the investigation into the intentions and motivations of potential successors, by engaging with them directly.

Furthermore, there is an emerging feeling of positivity surrounding farming, with farming being deemed, by Professor David Hughes, as ‘back in fashion’ (Hughes, 2010), linking to broader ideas of food security and neo-productivism. Although there has been suggestion that this renewed interest in food and farming marks the start of an exciting period for the farming community, which will ‘undoubtedly influence the minds of potential successors’, an understanding of this influence is lacking, and much needed; *are emerging ideas about the prospects of the industry replacing or weakening traditional motivations to farm?*

4. *To assess how, if at all, the concept of food security is understood by farmer and potential successors*

Objective 4 is a direct response to the obvious lacuna highlighted by Fish *et al* (2013) that, although agricultural uses of land are key contexts in which emerging agendas for food security will find their material expression, we currently know *very little* about how these agendas are being understood by the farming community. In addition, the lack of consensus surrounding the term food security in the farming community, as revealed by Fish *et al*, is in itself intriguing and provides further incentive to interrogate what farmers and, perhaps more importantly, their potential successors, understand the term to mean.

Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework

4.0 Introduction

Before describing the method deployed (Chapter 5), this chapter introduces the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, underpinning this research. The chapter is divided into three discrete but important foundational sections. Firstly, Section 4.1 introduces and justifies the adoption of the modified political economy approach in the research and suggests some implications for adopting the approach for this research. Subsequently, Section 4.2 explores wider societal change and its relevance to the farm family, specifically the upbringing and socialisation of farm children. Lastly, in response to the absence of ‘the successor’ in earlier research, Section 4.3 presents an innovative conceptual framework, which offers a working definition of ‘the successor’. Although distinct, the following theoretical and conceptual frameworks were utilised to guide, underpin and ground the empirical investigation into intergenerational farm succession.

4.1 Theoretical Standpoint: The Modified Political Economy Approach

As has been established in the preceding review of the succession literature, “the succession status of the farm family household is particularly important in shaping the way farm businesses develop over time” (Potter and Lobley, 1992b: 185) and succession status is a key influence on farmer behaviour. For example (and as illustrated in Chapter 2) Potter and Lobley (1992a: 325) highlighted how succession status was a powerful variable, with elderly farmers *with* successors, far less differentiated from the rest of the sample “having farmed areas, enterprise structures and levels of farming intensity that are close to the average for the sample as a whole”. A particularly pertinent example from their work, drawn upon in Chapter 2 (and used here to illustrate the relevance of the modified political economy approach to succession research) is the case of ‘Mr B’. They note:

“The farmer claims to take little account of agricultural policy, his main concern being to provide for his sons. In his early years his main interest was in maximizing profits and “*the thought of the future was a grey area. However, once married and with children of my own, my ambitions became stronger to provide a good standard of living and improve the value of the farm. Once both sons definitely wanted to come home then expansion and improvement plans came to fruition.*”” (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 297)

Although having vowed to help secure both its own, and international food supplies, the anticipated shift in British agricultural policy emphasis from post-productivist to neo-productivist, like other macro-level influences, needs to be considered *in conjunction* with factors such as

succession status, familial traditions and so on. With reference to farmer response to policy changes, specifically, the impact of decoupling on farmer behaviour, Viaggi *et al*'s (2011: 503) identified little change in behaviour as result of the change in policy, highlighting instead "the importance of personal and structural variables in determining the impact of decoupling", citing instead how "more classical factors emerge as determinants, *in particular* the existence of a successor".

Simultaneously, the literature suggests an increasing feeling of positivity surrounding farming as a career opportunity linked directly to the emergence of food security. The supposed *renaissance in agriculture* that Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012) anticipate is going to influence the minds of potential successors may not be interpreted by all potential successors in the same way. As presented in Chapter 2 (drawing on the work of Silvasti (2012), Villa (1999), Price and Conn (2012), Kuehne (2013), Burton and Fischer (2014) and Gill (2013)), motivations for farming are complex and often bound up in familial tradition and expectations. Are these wider ideas regarding the renaissance in agriculture having any bearing on potential successors as Whitehead, Lobley and Baker anticipate? By adopting a modified political economy approach this research anticipates that potential successors and incumbent farmers are likely to respond to this wider discourse in a variety of, perhaps unexpected ways, shaped by their internal familial circumstances and histories.

This research represents a response to the absence of consideration for the family farm as a decision making unit, by advocating and adopting an underlying *modified political economy* approach. The following discussion introduces the modified political economy approach, outlines its development and explains its relevance to this research.

4.1.1 The Modified Political Economy Approach: Progressing the Political Economy Approach

The modified political economy approach is the product of the failure of the political economy approach to explain the persistence of the family farm. Early theorists, including Marx and Lenin anticipated a rapid elimination of the family farm under the forces of industrial capitalism, but "despite increasing capitalisation, family labour-based farms have continued to predominate in most advanced economies representing something of a 'problem' for traditional, particularly Marxist, sociological analysis" (Marsden *et al*, 1989: 1). Specifically, the persistence and even increasing numerical significance of the family farm disproved Marx, who talked of the inevitable collapse of the family farm, and Lenin, who predicted the continuing process of differentiation between the owners of the means of production and landless workers. However, much research has highlighted the falsity of these early claims, pointing instead towards the variable responses farm families make:

“Continuous attempts by capital, both industrial and financial, to transform labour relations [...] *does not* tend to remove family labour based farms per se or lead to the direct control of land-based activities by institutional capital. *Rather*, it necessitates continuous adaptations in the labour process at the farm level leaving, by and large, the ownership and occupancy of agricultural land in the hands of farm families” (Marsden *et al*, 1989: 12, emphasis added)

In response to continuous external pressures, the family farm has a *diverse range* of survival strategies from which to choose, including “the substitution of family labour for hired labour, the restructuring of the firm’s business assets between different family and non-family members, new sources of income on and off the farm, as well as changes in the area of land occupied” (Munton and Marsden, 1991: 110), with many families combining more than one of these options. The modified political economy approach draws particular attention to the *variable* responses farm families can and do make. As Whatmore *et al* (1987: 120) elucidate, farm family members are “not simply passive subjects of inevitable structural processes” as early theorists dictate, and although, as Marsden *et al* (1989: 4) identify, “the *range* of options open to farm families may well be largely controlled by the combination of market and State structures”, what the modified political economy approach upholds and therefore forms a central facet of this research is that, “farm families exercise options *within* this range” (Marsden *et al*, 1989: 4, emphasis added).

Family farm behaviour or ‘survival strategies’ depend on what Marsden *et al* (1989) term *social potentialities*, such as births, deaths, children leaving home, marriage and the prospect of succession, that afford certain opportunities for changes in farm business development. Results from Marsden *et al*’s (1989) work on farm adaptations in Dorset, England, specifically (and interestingly given the aims of this research) highlight the existence of children as a ‘major justification’ for the expansion of the business. As Marsden and colleagues highlighted “the prospective continuity of the business could encourage the development of existing farm enterprises and the adoption of new ventures involving, in some cases, high levels of financial debt” (Marsden *et al*, 1989: 11). The modified approach understands behaviour not as the outcome of political and economic constraints forced upon the farm, nor purely the result of internal decision-making processes, as behaviouralists would suggest, but as the product of a complex interaction between the external constraints and the internal dynamics of the farm.

An important paper in the development and application of the modified political economy is Marsden, Munton and Ward’s (1992) work entitled *Incorporating Social Trajectories into Uneven Agrarian Development*. The paper “represents a critique and a development” of their earlier work that failed to “incorporate aspects of the social reproduction of farm families into the analysis of subsumption directly” (Marsden, Munton and Ward, 1992: 409). They recognise that penetration

by capital is “influenced not only by wider developments within the economic system but also by changes in the specific circumstances of family businesses – such as marriage, succession, illness – which in combination, affect the pattern and degree of capital penetration” (Marsden, Munton and Ward, 1992: 408). They developed five categories, each representing differing levels of ‘family commitment’, including:

1. *Strongly established families*: families where succession is planned and where the farm is at least in the second generation of family occupancy;
2. *Establishers*: where succession in the future has not been ruled out, on at least a second generation farm; or a first generation farm where a succession is definitely planned; or a first generation farm where a succession has not been ruled out and the farmer belongs to a local farming family network;
3. *Potential Establishers*: where farms are first generation family farms, the farmer does not belong to a local farm family network, and a succession has not yet been ruled out;
4. *Uncommitted Families*: succession has been ruled out, often because the children are unwilling to take over the farm;
5. *Non-family Farms*: where a manager, director or land agent is employed to manage the farm on behalf of a company.

By comparing levels of commitment with degree of subsumption, Marsden, Munton and Ward (1992: 423) observed “commitment to family continuity increases as farms become more subsumed” (Table 4.1). In other words, farmer behaviour, in terms of the pattern and degree of capital penetration, is influenced not only by wider economic and political developments but by the internal dynamics of the family farm, in this case, the farm family’s relationship with the land. Marsden, Munton and Ward’s (1992) work credibly evinced the modified approach by empirically demonstrating that “the relations between external capitals and internal farm production processes” are in “a constant state of interaction”.

Table 4.1
Social trajectory and subsumption level

<i>Social Trajectory Category</i>	<i>Subsumption Ideal Types</i>			
	Marginal Closed Unit	Transitional Dependent Unit	Integrated Unit	Subsumed Unit
Strongly Established Families	22	36.4	40.9	16.7
Establishers	24.7	39.8	27.3	16.7
Potential Establishers	4.9	1.7	13.6	0.0
Uncommitted Families	48.1	22.0	13.6	16.7
Non-Family Farms	0.0	0.0	4.5	50.0

Source: Marsden, Munton and Ward (1992)

They conclude that, “the results pose further questions about the assumptions through which Marx political economy has addressed the topic of agrarian development” (Munton, Marsden and Ward, 1992: 427).

Dissatisfaction with the political economy approach was not limited to its depiction of individuals as passive subjects of inevitable structural processes. The approach of early theorists, e.g. Marx and Lenin, in seeking universal laws of explanation to demonstrate how particular events or behaviours are the outcome of general processes, it fails to recognise the distinctiveness of individual localities. As Marsden *et al* (1989: 2, emphasis added) suggest “relations internal to the family household and relations between farm businesses and external agricultural and finance capitals” must be considered “*within* specific historical and local conditions”, where local traditions act alongside distinctive environmental factors, such as soil type and quality, topography and climate to shape farmer behaviour. The modified approach is appropriately sensitive to the mediating influence of cultural, social and environmental practices and appreciates that farmers and potential successors will not be driven to farm, or continue to farm, by economic or political conditions alone. This sensitivity and appreciation was later reinforced by the ‘cultural turn’ in human geography occurring in the late 1980s/early 1990s, which reinvigorated research into intergenerational farm transfer, “as geographical enquiry has become more sensitive to the role of culture as a process in the mediation of all aspects of life” (Morris and Evans, 2004: 95). The cultural turn strengthened understanding of farming and succession as a *cultural requirement*, rooted in familial attachment and emotional ties, rather than simply a product of rational, economic behaviour.

Another criticism of the political economy approach concerns the nature of theory it generates. Specifically, Bowler *et al* (1996: 286) recognise another problem with what they describe as “recent political economy and regulationist research”, noting how theory generated from such research is “unduly abstract and lacking in analytical concepts directed towards relating specific events to theory” because of the way it overemphasises the importance of the macro-economy in determining change. In contrast, the modified approach prioritises and empirically investigates what Bowler *et al* (1996: 286) describe as the “particular farm business, farmer and farm household characteristics” and integrates findings with existing conceptual research, to establish theory. Adopting a modified approach meets the need, as identified by both Marsden *et al* (1993) and Moran *et al* (1993) for ‘middle order theorising’, which counters *both* the unduly abstract nature of theory generated from the political economy approach, and depiction of the farmer as a passive subject of inevitable structural change.

4.1.2 The MPE and this Research

Despite the prevalence of the modified political economy approach in agricultural geography, and clear progression towards incorporating internal dynamics and human agency into analysis of family farm behaviour, consideration for the importance of internal family dynamics is *entirely* absent from previous discussions of food security with regards to the way the family farm could potentially respond to future food security policy, and simultaneously, the way that potential successors are interpreting and responding to the promise of the renaissance in agriculture. By adopting a modified political economy approach, the research anticipates and is thus sensitive to the idea that responses to wider food security discourse have the potential to differ at the individual farm level, with succession status as a key influence in this response, and equally, potential successors' responses to the supposed promise of the renaissance in agriculture have the potential to be highly differentiated, depending on family circumstances e.g. time on the land.

To allow for these potentially divergent responses to the key macro-influences discussed in this research (i.e. nascent food security policy and the supposed *renaissance* in agriculture) to clearly emerge, the method chosen had to be appropriately sensitive to different responses and give sufficient freedom to the participants to put forward and justify their different experiences, feelings and intentions. With this intention in mind, the details of the chosen methodology are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 5).

4.2 Wider Social Change: Implications for the Family Farm

Particularly relevant to the discussion of succession, successor creation and the transfer of managerial control between generations, is the fundamental societal shift from a 'society of duty' to a 'market place of opportunity' (Gullestad, 1997), as documented in the wider sociology and youth sociology literature. Although an exacting review of the theories explicating this epochal and systemic transformation is beyond the scope of this research (and have been addressed in detail elsewhere, see Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), an overview of the changes, and in particular the implications for the individual, are necessary to ground this research and its findings in the wider theoretical context.

Broadly speaking in pre-modern or traditional society, the individual was a relatively insignificant actor, with decisions tending to be made at the collective level. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) suggest individualist behaviour was even considered deviant or idiotic. However, industry's growing and insatiable demand for an increasingly flexible and mobile workforce began to wane "fixed ties of family, neighbourhood and occupation, as well as from ties to a particular regional culture and landscape" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 31). This process of modernization, known as early modernity, beginning, according to Giddens, at the start of the 17th century, defined

as “the disembedding and second the re-embedding of *traditional social forms* by *industrial social forms*” (Beck, 1994: 2), signalled the *start* of the *gradual* shift from collective responsibility to individual precedence. Central to the broader thesis of societal change is the core assumption or progressive freeing of agency from structure (Lash, 1994).

During the latter part of the 20th century, individualism further took hold. “By virtue of its inherent dynamism”, Beck (1994: 2) writes, “modern society is undercutting its formations of class, stratum, occupation, sex roles, nuclear family, plant, business sectors”, creating a new stage of modernization, understood as *late* or *reflexive modernization*; a new society.

For Beck (1994: 3) reflexive modernization “occurs surreptitiously and unplanned in the wake of normal, autotomized modernization and without an unchanged, intact political and economic order”. Whilst the suggestion that the progression of modernization is self-destructive mirrors Karl Marx’s suggestion that capitalism is ‘its own gravedigger’, Beck suggests it is entirely different. This emergent phase of modernization is not a crisis but should instead be understood as a triumph of its own success. “The idea that the transition from one social epoch to another could take place unintended and unpolitically, bypassing all the forums for political decisions [...] contradicts the democratic self-understanding of this society just as much as it does the fundamental convictions of sociology” (Beck, 1994: 3) is interrogated in deserving detail elsewhere.

Despite an increasing emphasis on the individual in the *early modern period*, behaviour remained largely determined and organised by collective structures, i.e. class system, gender roles. It was the disintegration of these structures, characteristic of this further phase of modernization that sets it apart from the earlier phase of modernity. Specifically, social institutions based on class, gender, the family and so on began to lose their relevance, and importantly, their authority. To use Giddens’s terminology, these institutions, as sources of guidance, were systematically disembedded (taken away) and re-embedded (replaced) “not by a void but rather by a new type of conducting and arranging life – no longer obligatory and ‘embedded’ in traditional models” (Beck, 1994: 14). The dissolution of these groupings which began to emerge in the 1970s in the Western world (although there are varying suggestions on the timings of this phase, see Gullestad (1997) below), means, unlike ever before, individuals are now forced to autonomously, “produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves” (Beck, 1994: 13) using a variety of sources, influences and ideas. Nothing about an individual’s identity can now be assumed, nor is it grounded in the safety of the family or community. Instead, society forces individuals to actively construct, organise and recreate their own identities, in a process of self-confrontation (Giddens, 1991). In this sense, reflexive is ‘responsive’ or ‘reactive’. As Beck summarises:

“Opportunities, threats, ambivalences of the biography, which it was previously possible to overcome in a family group, in the village community or by recourse to a

social class or group, must increasingly be perceived, interpreted and handled by individuals themselves”

Without the security of collective based institutions telling us what ‘should be done’ and simultaneously protecting the individual from the multitude of unknowns and risks of the life course, they are forced to become the “actor, designer, juggler and stage director of his or her own biography, identity, social networks, commitments and convictions” (Beck, 1994: 14). Beck (1994) terms this shift in emphasis *individualization*, which encapsulates this “disintegration of the certainties of industrial society [i.e. family, gender roles, class structure]” and the subsequent “compulsion to find and invent new certainties for oneself without them”. Linked to Beck’s concept of individualisation is the ‘Do It Yourself (DIY) biography’, whereby, as a result of the fragmentation of social institutions based on the family, social class and so on, a product of the emergence of late modern society, the individual is now forced to construct their own life, and encouraged to believe they can do what they want to do. It is important to consider that the process of “individualization is *not* based on the free decision of individuals” (emphasis added) and in fact, paradoxically, as Sartre describes it, people are actually *condemned* to individualisation.

Despite significant contribution to social theory, individualization it is not without criticism. Many of the criticisms concern Beck’s *overestimation* of the role of the individual in constructing and organising their own life story (see Pilkington, 2007; Kelly, 2001) and the coinciding *underestimation* of inequitable distribution of resource (see Lash, 1994). In their empirical exploration of youth transitions, Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 6) conclude that, “whilst transitions may now [...] involve a greater sense of personal choice and responsibility, there has been no clear break with the modernist period which social reproduction was so heavily reliant upon the determining power of class and other inequalities”. They use a metaphor of a journey to explicate the impacts of late modernity on the individual to reflect this difference:

“The ‘driver’ is able to select his or her route from a vast number of alternatives [...] The experience of driving one’s own car rather than travelling as a passenger on public transport leads to the *impression* that individual skills and decisions are crucial to the determination of outcomes [...] what many of the drivers fail to realise is that the type of car which they have been allocated at the start of the journey is the most significant predictor of the ultimate outcome” (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 7)

Similarly, with a specific focus on the supposed freedom from gender-specificity of the social life course, Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond (1993: 272) observed notable discrepancies between what young women thought they could do, and what they were able to achieve in reality. Whilst many participants intended to pursue high level paid work, as well as having a family, empirical evidence suggested “they were prevented from doing so by three factors: the provision of good

quality, accessible and affordable childcare; the inflexibility of the social organisation of paid work; and men's intransigence as far as the domestic division of labour is concerned". They criticise the alacrity with which the research community has adopted the concept of individualisation, suggesting instead, "an individualisation of *expectations* might well have taken places" and "social background and cultural milieu may no longer shape a person's *aspirations and expectations*, hopes and plans, to the same extent that they used to do" (Chisholm and Du Bois-Reymond, 1993: 272, emphasis added).

Critically, it is this freedom from tradition or taken-for-granted norms (regardless of whether this freedom is in fact actualised), which is significant in the context of farm succession and the socialisation of successors and is resonant in many of the issues emerging in this thesis.

No longer bound to what Adams (2003: 222) describes as "fixed culturally given identity positions", the individual has "opportunity to construct self-identity without the shackles of tradition and culture". To use Adams' example, the individual is no longer 'painting by numbers' or adhering to rigid, prescribed social expectations as previously enforced by collective institutions, but is now creating their own work of art. This shift has significant consequences for our understanding of farm successor creation and how and why farms pass through families. It also challenges the continued relevance of our understanding of farm succession as a product of tradition and the narrow socialisation of farm children (as explored in section 2.2). This change is increasingly recognised in the farm succession literature.

Villa (1999) was first to recognise the impact of the wider epochal shift on farmers' experiences of succession amongst different generations of farmers in Norway. Her findings confirm the relevance of the individualisation thesis to the experiences of farm successors (and thus, this research), concluding "farmers in the previous generations were subordinated to both family and farm obligations", suggesting "the oldest were 'born to be farmers', while the youngest felt they had several opportunities to choose between" owing to the increasing freedom for farmers children to choose and live according to their own interests (Villa, 1999: 339).

In their investigation into parenting practices in farm families, Brandth and Overrein (2013: 108) recognised how "the older generation of fathers carried out fathering practices in line with the expectation that the children should become good farmers" and "while it *was* almost self-evident that the son should [...] become a farmer, now it is the opposite" (emphasis added). In line with the broader individualisation thesis, they observe how "a greater emphasis is put on choice, and resourcing their children to meet the demands for skills in future society" (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 109).

Most recently, Fischer and Burton (2014: 9) further confirm this shift from what they describe as “taken for granted expectations of duty and subordination to family farm goals towards a greater emphasis on individual freedom/choice”. Although the successor in their case study felt he was never explicitly encouraged to farm by his parents, Fischer and Burton (2014: 9) add, “however, all interviewees [...] perceived farming as a ‘blood-based’ occupation [...] constructed as part of a long-term identification process”, which draws on a wider attachment to the intergenerational story of the farm (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 9):

Mother: His roots are here.

Father: It’s the history. As you know, my grandfather came here in 1936 and we built the farm up. I’ve carried the flag for my father and I think [son] is wanting to do the same as I have done.

Despite the clear emphasis on choice in Fischer and Burton’s example, the successor continued to value, and thus draw on, tradition in his decision, something that Beck’s thesis fails to recognise. By considering his family history, the decision to farm is no less reflexive for the successor, he is simply drawing on his family’s history *as part* of this reflexive process. The key point to make, as summarised by Fischer and Burton (2014: 10), is “increasingly, children develop the ability to more reflexively engage in the identification, of accepting, rejecting and modifying others’ identifications and acting upon their interpretations”.

Although, encouragingly given the wider objectives of this thesis, neither Villa (1999), Brandth and Overrein (2013), nor Fischer and Burton (2014) evidenced a decline in commitment to family succession as a result of this emergent emphasis on autonomy and freedom associated with the onset of late modernity (although Fischer and Burton do anticipate such issue), Villa (1999) appeals for further, and more thorough engagement with the topic. This is of further interest since individualisation has further taken hold since Villa made this appeal in 1999. Furthermore, whilst the number of successors identified may not have numerically wavered, it is patently clear that this wider societal shift is being felt amongst the farming community and *is* shaping parenting and the upbringing/socialisation of farm children, with singular implications for successors’ experiences of identifying themselves as ‘the successor’. In addition, having established individualisation and the ‘DIY biography’ are largely relevant to farm families, what is currently lacking, is an understanding of the implications of these changes *beyond* successor identification, such as the impact on successors’ (and farmers’) experiences of the transfer of managerial control. It even has potential to extend to their eventual levels of success, ability and enthusiasm when it comes to actually running the farm, post-handover – after all, this generation would have come to be farmers via a (potentially very) different journey to older counterparts and have been encouraged to think as individuals.

On a more practical note, Gullestad (2004) recognised the ‘many problems’ inherent to the collection of terminology used to describe (broadly) the (same) emergent social epoch, which include *post-industrial society* (Bell, 1974), *late capitalism* (Piore and Sabel, 1984), *post-modernity* (Harvey, 1989) and *late modernity* (Giddens, 1991), and the periods to which they apply. She recognised how “all these theorists argue that there are profound wide-ranging constellations of changes occurring globally since World War II” (Gullestad, 2004: 8) and offers a resolution to this confusion, defining “the present period from about 1970 a ‘transformed modernity’, and the previous era the period of ‘classic modernity’” (Gullestad, 2004: 8), both of which are adopted throughout this research.

4.3 Bringing the Potential Successor into Focus: A Conceptual Framework

Please note Section 4.3 is closely based on and draws directly on the author’s previous publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (2014) ‘The Importance of Next Generation Farmers: A Conceptual Framework to Bring the Potential Successor into Focus’, *Geography Compass*, 8 (5): 300-312. This article is included in Appendix 15.

Having highlighted the absence of potential successors from our understanding of the succession process and appealed for engagement with what has been recognised as a strategic and reflective actor (Riley, 2009), before detailing the overall research strategy in Chapter 5, this chapter presents a working definition of exactly who the successor is (and importantly, is not).

Stemming from the confusion surrounding what we *actually* understand succession to mean, which Ward and Lowe (1994: 174) attribute to “the blurring in the terminology” particularly “between ‘inheritance’ and ‘succession’”, as well as the fleeting references to the successor that dominate the associated literature are two, interrelated problems; firstly, the term successor has multiple and overlapping meanings, and secondly, where the term successor is used, it is encumbered with outdated and inaccurate preconceptions.

4.3.1 Multiple and Overlapping Meanings

Lost amongst this confusion is who or what the successor is, and as a result, the term has gained multiple and overlapping meanings, which have been compounded by fleeting references to ‘the successor’ in the associated literature. For example, Linda Price and Rachel Conn’s recent publication, which I previously champion for targeting *both* the incumbent farmer and the next generation in their research process, gives no consideration to who or what the successor is, having vaguely requested “the existing business holder pass the second questionnaire onto an identified successor” (Price and Conn, 2012: 99).

The ‘successor’ is used as a catch-all term, alluding to several entirely different circumstances that can be broadly divided into three, including:

1. Perhaps most common in the literature is the use of the term successor to describe someone who is (actively) moving towards managerial control of the farm. In Potter and Lobley’s (1992a: 318) discussion, they talk of a successor being someone ‘in the wings’; someone who *will* take over the farm.
2. In some cases, the term successor can merely refer to someone, who by virtue of nothing more than their relationship to the farmer, typically the farmer’s son, is *likely* to gain managerial control over the farm.
3. The term also refers to someone who *has* gained managerial control of the farm. In their recent paper on small family farms in Ohio, Steiger *et al* (2012: 96) talk of successors as being “current farmers who had inherited the farm (making themselves successors)”.

Without a clear understanding of whom or what the potential successor is, they have been understandably excluded from our research. Critically, the proposed framework distinguishes between the above positions and offers a clear definition of who this important actor is.

For the purposes of the ensuing methodology, it is essential to outline a clear understanding of whom or what the potential successor is.

The Successor

As denoted in Figure 4.1, the **successor** is someone that has *succeeded* and is now in managerial control of the farm. Simply, if we understand succession as “the transfer of managerial control over the use of farm business assets” (Gasson and Errington, 1993), then the successor must be someone who *has* succeeded; someone who *has* achieved managerial control over the use of said assets. According to this framework, the potential successor becomes the successor having achieved full managerial control of the farm, where full managerial control is defined as having the ultimate control over *all* aspects of the farm, including the finances, recognised by many as “the last bastion of the father’s control” (Hastings, 1984: 199) and typically the last area to be transferred. There are no other criteria for ‘becoming’ a successor. This challenges Gasson and Errington’s (1993) belief that inheritance, or transfer of ownership, “confers the right to take decisions over the disposition of assets” and thus marks the ‘creation’ of the successor, by automatically reassigning managerial control. Although, Gasson and Errington’s view *may* typically be the case, it is possible that the successor may assume managerial control at the same time as inheritance, or even before. The proposed framework aims to more accurately reflect the diversity of experiences and circumstances by not limiting or prescribing the ways in which the potential successor ‘becomes’ the successor.

The Potential Successor

In contrast to the successor, the **potential successor** is an overarching term to describe someone who could, potentially, gain managerial control of the farm. The potential successor can assume two distinct positions:

1. The **possible successor** is someone who is *assumed* to be the future successor, by virtue of their relationship to the farmer. This can be the farmer's assumption or the potential successor's assumption. A farmer's son, currently too young to have a say in the matter, may be considered by the farmer, as the future successor. For example, in their survey of English farmers, Errington and Tranter (1991) claim that a quarter of farmers had identified a successor by the time their eldest son is 10 years old. But until the son is old enough to decide for himself what he intends to do, he can only be considered a 'possible' successor.
2. The **prospective successor** is (actively) moving towards managerial control of the farm. The prospective successor is someone who is, as a result of a formal or informal arrangement between the current farmer, the farming family and themselves, on course and typically, but not always, actively moving towards gaining managerial control of the farm. Although this is a likely step, it is by no means universal. Many successors may have bypassed this step, perhaps suddenly gaining full managerial control over-night, upon the death or incapacity of the farmer.

The progression from a possible successor to a prospective successor will be described as the *Possible-Prospective Transition*. It denotes any kind of *collective* recognition and agreement between the farmer, the farming family⁷ and the potential successor(s), that *the* potential successor(s) *will* in time, succeed to the farm (although some commentators observe a more nebulous identification process, where a natural prospective successor just 'is'). This can be the result of an informal conversation or a more formal succession plan and can occur at a specific time or can be a protracted transition.

This distinction is more than a convoluted semantic debate, because the successor, prospective successor and possible successor are three distinct actors and are therefore likely to have hugely contrasting thoughts, experiences and perspectives, which will result in different understandings, attitudes and behavioural intentions.

⁷ The 'farming family' can extend beyond the farming household to include, relatives such as the farmer's off-spring, siblings or parents

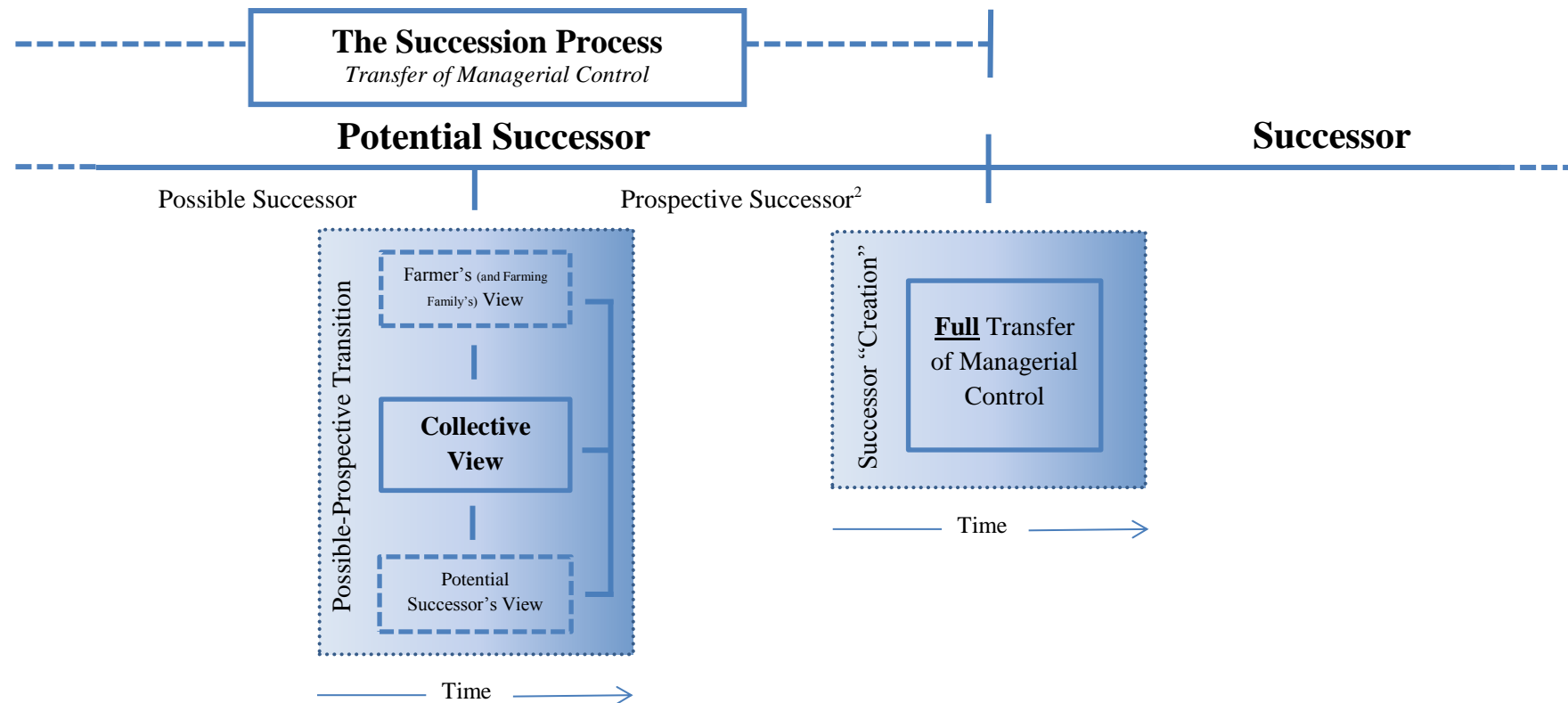


Figure 4.1 Who is the potential successor? A conceptual diagram

⁸ There is not always a 'prospective successor' – this 'stage' may never occur, for example, on the sudden death of the farmer, a 'possible successor' may become the successor 'overnight' without ever being the 'prospective successor'

Mann's (2007) 'model of occupational choice for potential farm successors' depicts how what influences potential successors' occupational choices can change throughout the succession process, because of their changing experiences (Figure 4.2). During what he refers to as the pre-business and introductory stages, Mann (2007: 437) believes "identity-related factors will predominate in any decision", whilst later on, he describes as "environmental factors" (although he is actually referring to the economic and political 'climate'), "will play the major role" (Mann, 2007: 437). The model predicts that identity related factors, such as a preference for working outdoors or with animals, are particularly influential during these early stages, whereas during the later stages of the succession process, a potential successor becomes "concerned primarily with the economic viability of farming", and other environmental factors (Mann, 2007: 437).

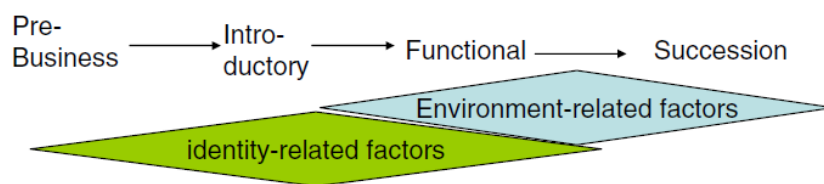


Figure 4.2 A model of occupational choice for potential farm successors

Although Mann's model is idealistic, particularly in his suggestion that economic viability of farming is the primary concern of potential successors in the later stages of succession, despite a wealth of literature suggesting this is not the case (Price and Conn, 2012), it nonetheless further highlights the need to demarcate the difference between potential successors at different stages of the succession process.

It is the potential successor who is of particular interest in the context of the looming delivery of the food security agenda. As already stated in the foregoing discussion, "agricultural uses of land are key contexts in which emerging agendas for food security will find their material expression," (Fish *et al*, 2013: 40) and with this in mind, it is "the next generation" i.e. potential successors, that have "a unique opportunity to build a challenging and enriching career for themselves" (Leach, 2012: 206). Unlike the successor who, having graduated through the 'occupational choice process' (Mann, 2007), has made the decision or commitment to take over the farm, the potential successor will be disposed to, or susceptible to, a wide range of influences and factors, during what Mann (2007) describes as a high-intensity period, making the potential successor a highly deserving research subject in the context of the food security agenda.

4.3.2 'The Successor': Encumbered with Preconceptions

In addition to this this lack of clear understanding of whom or what the term successor refers to, the surrounding literature is also encumbered with many preconceptions, which assume a degree of

homogeneity amongst ‘successors’, yet there is increasing evidence that “the process and types of successors may not be as clean as suggested” (Steiger *et al*, 2012: 96).

Just as feminist geography has “sought to break down the universal categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ and focus instead on the diversity and difference *within* genders” (Little, 2002: 30), it is the intention of this framework to highlight the diversity and difference existing amongst who we know as the ‘successor’.

Who is the potential successor?

Stemming from its prevalence in earlier literature is the idea that the successor is the farmer’s son. In Weston’s (1977: 241) discussion of *The Problems of Succession*, he talks about the “transference of control from farmer to son”. Similarly, Hastings (1984: 229) describes four stages in the succession process which he illustrates by referring exclusively to fathers and their sons and following on from this, Hutson (1987) focuses on the changing relationships between father and son, during these phases. Although an accurate reflection of the dominant patterns of intergenerational transfer at the time, and, although to a lesser extent, now, it has wrongly shaped and informed our understanding of who the successor is. An example of this is the contemporary work of Price and Conn (2012). Based on *only* 75 postal questionnaires, Price and Conn (2012) unsoundly reinforce this assumed farmer/father, son/successor dualism, as of earlier succession literature, by entitling the section of their discussion *Farmer’s Son Perspective*. Even where gendered assumptions are avoided, for example in Mann’s (2007: 437) work, it is *still* limited to farmer’s children, targeting only “farm couple’s off-spring”. I am not disputing that “the traditional script [...] in succession is still strong” (Silvasti, 2012: 16), in fact, more contemporary research showed that typically, successors *are* farmers’ sons. For example, in their 1993 survey, Potter and Lobley (1996a: 292) claimed “nearly all successors were male” and 86 per cent of two-generation farms *were* managed by father and son teams. Instead I aim to highlight the successor is not, and never has been universal; ultimately, the successor can be *any* gender, *any* age, *any* relation (or even non-relation) and so on, yet the term successor continues to be loaded with these preconceptions that need to be eradicated before ‘successor’ becomes a useful term.

What do they do? The Standardised Succession Process

Although the literature recognises “in reality, the patterns of succession are many and varied” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 212), it generally assumes a fairly standardised process of ‘handing over the reins’. For example, Gasson and Errington (1993: 212) claim that in the UK “most cases are following the ‘partnership’ or the ‘separate enterprise’ patterns [...] in which the successor gradually comes to share managerial control of the home farm”.

Observers of the succession process including Commins and Kelleher (1973), Hastings (1984), Hutson (1987), Keating and Little (1991) and Errington and Tranter (1992) point to the existence of a ‘ladder’ of responsibility, which the successor climbs, gradually increasing their managerial control over the farm. Although recognising the speed at which the successor ascends the ladder varies considerably and “a number of factors appear to influence this – characteristics of the father, of his successor and the relationship between them as well as characteristics of the farm itself” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 218), there is a prevailing and yet tacit idea that the potential successor progresses through the succession process, or ascends the ‘rungs of the succession ladder’ in this linear and fairly standardised way.

The intention here is not to discuss the merits of Gasson and Errington’s typology, nor the validity of the succession ladder (which are discussed in the literature review), but instead to propose that the literature presents an ideal and prescriptive idea of the succession process, that ultimately glosses over the inimitable idiosyncrasies of the potential successor. In their recent article *Cultivating narratives: Cultivating successors*, Steiger *et al* (2012: 102) criticise Gasson and Errington’s (1993) ideal types or what they call ‘categories of succession routes’, claiming they have taken the easy option by “paint[ing] a statistical, academic (theoretical) picture” of the succession process, advocating instead that researchers ‘listen’ to individuals and avoid typecasting.

With this in mind, I propose a better way of conceptualising the array of potential successors’ characteristics and circumstances is through ‘The Potential Successor Spectrum’ (Figure 4.3). The series of spectrums denote how the characteristics and circumstances of the successor can vary greatly, but ultimately does not make the potential successor ‘any less’ of a potential successor. One potential successor may own a significant part of the farm, yet reside away from the holding, have little managerial control over and only work there on occasions when extra labour is required. Another, may not own any of the farm, yet live on the farm, have good degree of managerial control and work there full-time.

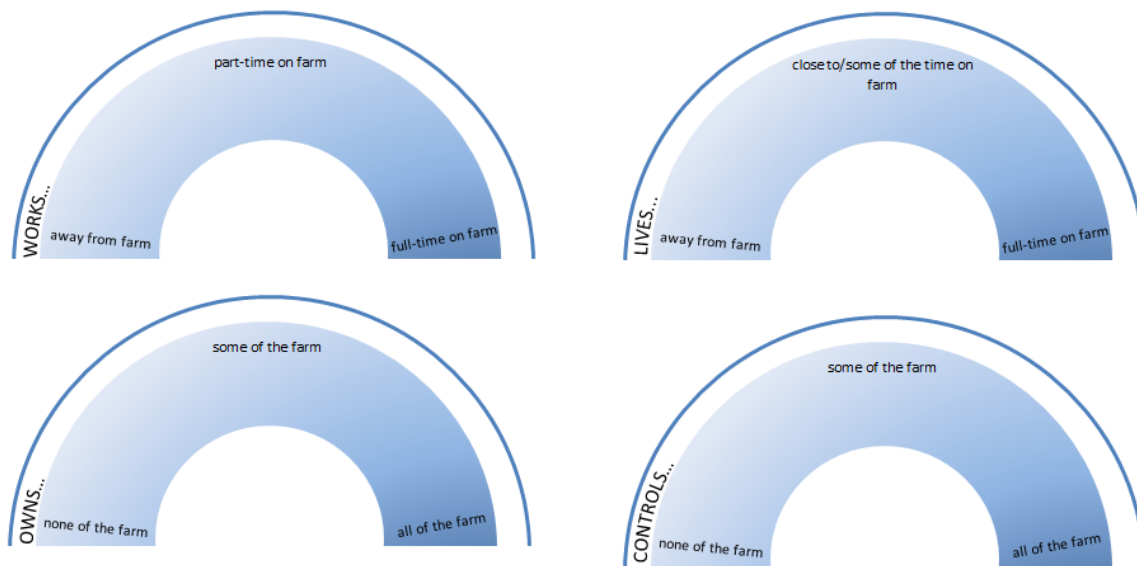


Figure 4.3 Potential successor spectrums

The idea of the spectrum is to denote that there is no one way of ‘being’ a potential successor and progressing through the succession process; there is no prescribed order to the ‘rungs of the succession ladder’, a flexibility that is not explicit in the literature that is loaded with preconceptions and generalisations.

4.3.3 The Conceptual Framework: Some Methodological Considerations

It is a central aim of this research to investigate how the *renaissance in agriculture*, “with demands from all quarters” will “influence the minds of potential successors” (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 235). Yet before this conceptualisation, investigating whether the renaissance in agriculture was wielding any influence on the successor would have been logistically fraught, hindered by the lack of understanding of who or what the successor actually is. By making this distinction between the successor and the potential successor, it confirms that this research is interested in the *potential successor*, someone who could, potentially, gain managerial control of the farm in the future; the actor who has “a unique opportunity to build a challenging and enriching career for themselves” (Leach, 2012: 206) in the context of the food security agenda. Thus, as will be outlined in Chapter 5, the research was able to specifically target both the incumbent farmer *and* the potential successor as research participants.

By offering a clear definition of who the potential successor is (and just as importantly, is not), it is hoped that it will encourage further engagement with them, in a field that, as highlighted in the preceding discussion of the literature, has often prioritised farmer voice, thus facilitating a more well-rounded and widely informed understanding of the process of succession. More specifically, given the importance of a next generation of farmers to the industry’s propensity to adapt to and succeed in

responding to the challenges of the future, we need, now more than ever, to enhance our understanding of the intentions of potential successors. By distinguishing the potential successor as a specific research subject and promoting engagement with them, it is hoped it will improve the accuracy, and depth, of our understanding of the likely availability of a next generation of farmers.

It is also hoped the distinction will encourage further engagement with the potential successor as an autonomous actor outside the scope of *this* research. The wider potential academic and policy implications of this conceptual framework are discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis (Chapter 9).

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.0 Introduction

Broadly, the method used semi-structured interviews with farmers and where applicable, their potential successors, focusing on 5 contiguous parishes in mid-Devon, UK. Following this introduction, the chapter begins with a critical discussion of the choice of the case study area, before systematically discussing the sources and methods of data collection, and exploring the relevant ethical considerations. It continues by detailing the methods of data analysis.

The method was driven by three main factors that have arisen from the preceding literature review. **Firstly**, the dominant, and typically quantitative and/or large scale research methods, and associated generalised frameworks, fail to fully capture the intricacies of succession, as a result we know surprisingly little about the actual process (Dyck *et al*, 2002). **Secondly**, despite being a key actor in the succession process, the potential successor remains conspicuously absent within the associated literature, debilitating our understanding of intergenerational farm transfer. **Thirdly**, we know agricultural uses of land provide the key contexts in which the food security agenda will find its material expression, yet as suggested by Fish *et al* (2013), we know very little about how ideas of food security are being understood amongst farmers.

Ultimately, farmers', and particularly potential successors' voices, remain essential but *neglected* in the context of emergent food security discourse. These caveats, discussed in more detail in the previous chapters, demonstrate the pressing need for "a range of more in-depth and qualitative approaches" (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008: 46) that will allow for a more informed and rigorous understanding of the process of succession, and give a much needed voice to the individuals concerned, particularly the potential successor; an actor who is perhaps now more important than ever, given the impending food security challenge and demands on the industry. Specifically, the research sought to fulfil the **objectives** stated in Table 1.1.

5.1 Sources and Methods of Data Collection

The research does not ignore the wealth of previous research into succession that has highlighted the influence succession status has on farmer behaviour and explored patterns of intergenerational transfer, but believes the dominance of quantitative methods and focus on 'the farmer', within this field means this effort to truly understand succession in family farms is arguably inchoate and exploratory in nature. It is the intention of this research to expand on and develop this work; with a particular interest in farmers' and potential successors' understandings, experiences and intentions.

As summarised in Figure 5.1, the method initially drew on the knowledge of two key local informants, who were used to help construct a general image of occupation change in the area, before using historical farm data and maps, from the 1941-1943 National Farm Survey (NFS), as a basis for the discussion of succession during semi-structured interviews with 26 farmers and 19 potential successors across a collection of 5 contiguous parishes in mid-Devon, England (details of the location of these parishes and justification for their selection are described in Section 5.2, below).

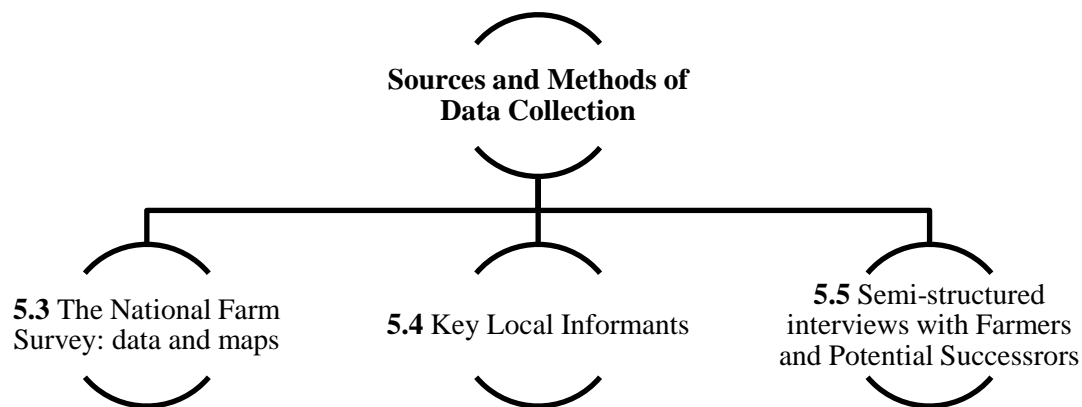


Figure 5.1 Overview of sources and methods of data collection

5.2 A Case Study Approach

As suggested, the research was conducted in 5 contiguous parishes in mid-Devon. The following section explains the geographical focus of the research, namely the parishes of Hatherleigh, Iddesliegh, Monkokehampton, Broadwoodkelly and Winkleigh. For simplicity, in the coming sections the parishes will be referred to collectively as ‘Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes’.

5.2.1 A Note on Using a Case Study Approach

“To generalize is to be an idiot. To particularize is the lone distinction of merit” (William Blake, 1808 – see Stake, 1978: 2)

Although “it is widely believed that case studies are useful in the study of human affairs” (Stake, 1978: 5), the scientific status of case studies, as a method in the social sciences, is ambiguous. Despite its obvious applicability in studying a vast array of relevant real-world phenomena, the case study method “has not achieved widespread recognition as a method of choice” (Yin, 2012: 5).

The majority of the notoriety stems from the perceived inability to generalize the case study’s finding to any broader level. Findings from Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes are not intended to be ‘typical’; the sample is small and idiosyncratic, and data is qualitative, meaning there is no way to establish the probability that data is representative of some larger population of farmers and potential successors. For many, this would render case study findings’ of little value.

On the contrary, such a traditional view of social science methods is, according to Yin (2012) now 'entirely outdated'. The case study approach, defined as "an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a "case"), set within its real-world context" (Yin, 2009, cited in Yin 2012: 4), procures an invaluable and deep understanding, "resulting in new learning about real-world behaviour and its meaning" (Yin, 2012: 4). The case-study is particularly useful where the desire is "to derive a(n) (up-)close or otherwise in-depth understanding- that is, an insightful appreciation of the 'case(s)'" (Yin, 2012: 4) and Lijphart (1971: 691) recognises "a great advantage of the case study is that by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined". Given the absence of detailed, rigorous and in-depth engagement in the succession literature (a caveat this research intends to address), the case study approach lends itself particularly well to the aims of this research.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001) note that all social research simplifies phenomena investigated, but assert that case studies can do this in ways that 'strongly relate' to the experiences of those studied, by retaining what they refer to as the 'noise' of real life than many other types of research, which may form a highly significant part of the 'story'. Dominant methods in the field, such as the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey which were conducted internationally, have failed to adequately capture the intricacies and complexities of the succession process, meaning we actually know surprisingly little about the actual process (Dyck *et al*, 2002).

It is essential to recognise, however, that using a case study approach to examine social phenomena is the lack of wider generalisability given the detailed and specific information of the place (Snow and Trom, 2002). As Lijphart (1971: 691) suggests, "science is a generalizing activity" and it is widely regarded that "a single case can constitute neither the basis for a valid generalization" (Lijphart, 1971: 691). Farming and therefore succession is, perhaps more so than any other occupation, context specific. Essentially, this means not *all* of the findings are transferable; in its most basic sense, the findings contribute to our understanding of intergenerational farm transfer in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. However, many of the broader conclusions regarding the succession process, will have resonance beyond Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Although, as surmised by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001: 11) case study findings are "not generalizable in the conventional sense", they generate new thinking and "that thinking has a validity that does not entirely depend on cases from which it is drawn". Findings from Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes *can* be compared with and judged against similar work; findings can be transposed beyond the original site of investigation.

"What becomes useful understanding is a full and thorough knowledge of the particular, recognizing it also in new and foreign contexts" and this "knowledge is a form of generalization too, not scientific induction" but what Stake (1978: 6) describes as *naturalistic generalisation*, arrived at by identifying the similarities of objects or issues both in and out of the original context.

For Stake (1978: 6), to generalize this way is to be both intuitive and empirical, and not idiotic.

Case studies can, and do, make vital contributions to “the establishment of general propositions and thus to theory-building” (Lijphart, 1971: 691). Ultimately, exploring succession issues in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes represents a direct and satisfying way of improving understanding in the field of succession.

5.2.2 The Need for ‘Sustained Scholarship within a Specific Geographical Milieu’

In his introduction to his reflective chapter *Farming Continuities and Change*, Winter (2011: 131) proposes:

“It is remarkable how few local studies of agrarian sociology followed in the path of Howard Newby’s seminal work of the 1970s, studies giving due weight to local social formations and local politics, to farmers’ worldviews within that local context, to the interactions between farmer behaviour and their occupancy and use of land... whilst social surveys abound, sustained scholarship within a specific geographical milieu is very rare”

Winter’s (2012) observation of the absence of ‘sustained scholarship within a specific geographical milieu’ credibly rationalises use of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes as a means of rigorously exploring issues of succession and intergenerational farm transfer.

5.2.3 ‘Sustained Scholarship within a Specific Geographical Milieu’: Investigating Succession

The foregoing literature review has illustrated the complexity and intricacies of succession and intergenerational farm transfer. Winter (2011: 139) recognises this “diversity, a plurality, of practice and experience in agriculture” rendering “detailed local study essential if we are to fully understand the aggregate picture” and he continues by providing different examples that astutely “illustrate the muddiness of statistical trends” and the subsequent “need for local study” (142).

The review of the literature also highlighted the dominance of geographically broad surveys, which Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 34) suggest are particularly limited:

“the unified postal questionnaire format imposing limitations in terms of collecting *detailed* historical and cultural information on farm succession in each country”

And, as a result, call for “more culturally informed local level studies” (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008: 34) that use “a range of more in-depth and qualitative approaches”.

The foregoing discussion has also highlighted how surveys, and where used, more qualitative methods such as interviews, completed by or with the ‘principal farmer’, have failed to give the potential

successor a voice. Like the farm child, the successor is merely the subject of “passing references, most commonly framed through the words of parents” (Riley, 2009: 246), thus rendering our understanding of intergenerational farm transfer incomplete.

Focusing on a small number of parishes provides the means by which to build relationships with participants and farming families and critically to obtain access to the previously silent and subsumed potential successor, in a way a broader geographic study would not allow.

Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 34) also note how little attention has been given to international comparisons of the succession process, suggesting, with specific reference to Salamon’s work (see Salamon, 1992) “one reason for this could be that variation in the cultural norms and values which influence succession”. Ultimately, this suggests the local is important. Factors such as the availability of local employment or lifestyle opportunities outside agricultural or the local norms and values, will differ from place to place, and need to be taken in consideration during the research process. Local level engagement allows for this.

5.2.4 Identifying the Research Location

Having established the need for rigorous local level engagement as a means of exploring succession, the researcher was presented with the choice of localities. Although initially, limiting the search area to within an hour’s drive of Exeter was primarily pragmatic, there were also several important reasons why a locality within Devon, proved a rational choice.

Firstly, in the context of the proposed method, completeness of NFS maps was an important factor. Parenthetically, Southall (2006: 9) singled out Devon’s maps (as well as Kent’s) as “almost ideally suited to the construction of Geographical Information System” (a tool deployed in this research), because of their completeness and condition. Secondly, there is also belief that succession and associated decisions are more likely to represent salient issues in areas with such proximity to urban centres such as Exeter and Plymouth. Potential successors living in such proximity to urban centres have the opportunity to commute or move to these areas and still remain near or even on the family farm. For example, a national survey of farmers by the National Westminster bank (National Westminster Bank, 1992) conclusively showed rates of succession to be higher in the upland areas, suggesting that a lack of alternative income earning activities in or around these areas rendered potential successors ‘stuck’ and were thus, more likely to succeed to the farm.

Four parishes were initially identified for preliminary investigation, all within an hour’s drive of Exeter, all with a population of between 1000 and 2000 (Table 5.1) and all within the Culm area (see Section 5.2.5 (ii)). These included Hatherleigh, Winkleigh, Lapford and Witheridge. It was hoped by

identifying one or two large parishes with good amenities, they would offer a base from which to work from during fieldwork, and would narrow the search for other smaller parishes.

Table 5.1
Initial parishes - population

Parish	Population
Witheridge	1390
Lapford	1006
Hatherleigh	1854
Winkleigh	1643

Source: Devon County Council Online (2012)

Initial investigations into these parishes were carried out during the Spring of 2012. During this period, contact was made with key members of the local community, including longstanding local residents, local shop owners and local farmers. Informal visits to these people in their respective parishes were used to ‘get a feel for the area’, gauge the likely interest in my research and get an understanding of what it would be like to conduct research there. Hatherleigh and Winkleigh emerged as obvious choices in this respect.

As already suggested, confining farm research to a specific boundary creates the issue of farm land ‘spilling’ over into surrounding parishes. Taylor *et al* (2012: 95) propose that “an individual parish is quite possibly too small an area” and suggest “clusters of parishes might be a better solution”. With this in mind, the smaller parishes of Iddesleigh, Monkokehampton and Broadwoodkelly, situated in-between Hatherleigh and Winkleigh were also selected, to create a contiguous study area. By identifying a contiguous set of parishes, it goes some way to overcoming this issue (see Figure 5.2).

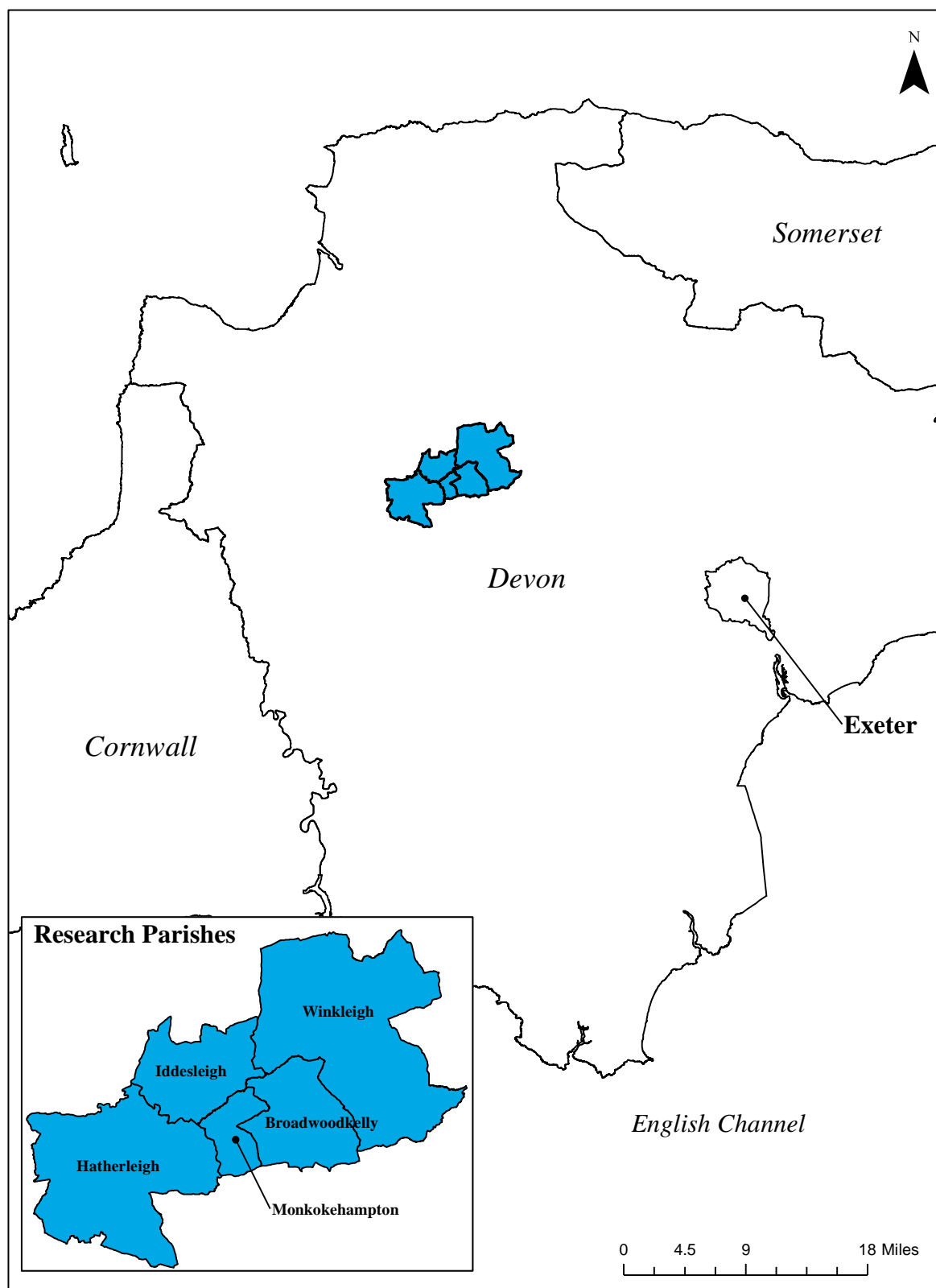


Figure 5.2 Location of the study parishes, in Devon, South West England (*Source: Author*)

5.2.5 Reasons for Choosing Hatherleigh and Surrounding Parishes

(i) Local Support

The reception in Hatherleigh and Winkleigh was particularly promising; a local farmer and active local resident were particularly interested in the work I was doing and offered their support for the duration of the research. The support offered was particularly important given the nature of the research method which relied entirely on recruiting willing participants; these ‘local informants’ offered to put me in contact with farmers in the area who would be willing to participate in the research.

Both Hatherleigh and Winkleigh had well maintained parish websites⁹. Hatherleigh had a monthly newsletter, the ‘Parish Pump’, which is produced for and delivered free to the residents of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Similarly, Winkleigh had a quarterly newsletter, delivered free, to the residents of Winkleigh and surrounding parishes.

Both mediums, the website and the newsletters, offered potential means of generating interest in my research, as well as recruiting research participants. In October 2012, I published an introduction to my research and request for participants in the Hatherleighs Newsletter, the ‘Parish Pump’ (see Appendix 1).

(ii) The Culm Area

Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes are located within the Culm area, an area of 1,200 square miles of distinctive landscape, which largely dictates the dominance of certain types of farming.

“The rolling ridges of the Culm reach from the foot of Dartmoor and the edge of the Cornish Killas to the Atlantic coast. They extend eastwards to merge with the Exmoor landscape and to stand high above the Devon Redlands. The open, commonly treeless ridges are separated by an intricate pattern of small valleys forming the catchments of the rivers Taw, Torridge and Mole” (Natural England, Online: 161)

The area is underlain by the ‘Culm Measures’, “comprising Lower Carboniferous shales, slates, cherts, limestones and volcanic rocks, and Upper Carboniferous mudstones and sandstones” (Natural England, Online: 163). The shales of the Culm Measures give rise to mainly heavy, infertile stagnogley (grey, slowly permeable soils, with little oxygen) which means the soil is notoriously difficult to work. The generally poor condition of Culm Measure farmland is attributable to three

⁹See hatherleigh.net and winkleighonline.com

adverse physical factors, including high annual rainfall, heavy intractable clay soils overlying an impermeable subsoil; and an almost complete absence of run-off as a result of a little natural slope.

Morris *et al* (2011: 1) note “none of these factors, where found in isolation, proves an insurmountable obstacle to successful husbandry, but where found in association they have given rise to a farming environment of extreme difficulty”. It is this relatively poor land that has given rise to the areas distinctive farming landscape. Dominated by pasture, with roughly ten per cent of land comprising woodland, heath and wetland, means “it is predominantly a dairying area although beef cattle and sheep are also significant” (Natural England, Online: 164). These climatic and soil conditions virtually preclude the growth of cash crops, including cereals, oil-yielding crops, vegetables, tree fruit and soft fruit. The land, although poor, if properly managed is “capable of providing adequate pasture” and even has “the advantages of possessing an excellent late growth and being resistant to treading by stock” (Morris *et al.*, 2011: 4).

The iconic sheep sculpture (Figure 5.3), created by Roger Dean using money from West Devon Borough Council and European funding, revealed in 1996 “has become the symbol of Hatherleigh” (Bater, 2008: 3) and reflects the importance of livestock farming in Hatherleigh and surrounding areas.



Figure 5.3 Sheep sculpture in Hatherleigh (Source: Geograph, 2009)

Although, Winter (1986) recognises West Devon as one of the most difficult farming areas in Devon, he also recognises the region as a geographical area where family farming is particularly strong. It is in areas such as this, where farming is widely regarded as particularly difficult, that familial commitment and attachment to the land is likely to be stronger. In an area like Hatherleigh and

surrounding parishes, where farming is particularly challenging, motivation is likely to be centrally related to family and tradition rather than profit. Although more specifically concerned with the financial difficulty, as opposed to the physical difficulties associated with farming, a similar notion was observed by Price and Conn (2012: 104) in Northern Ireland, where “despite awareness across the generations of increasing hardships of the lifestyle [...] keeping ‘name on the land’ [...] retains a pull across existing business holders and their potential successors”. It is not unreasonable to suggest what Price and Conn (2012) describe as ‘keeping the name on the land’ is particularly prevalent in areas such as the Culm region, where potential successors are more likely to be motivated by this familial commitment, rather than financial or husbandry motivations, given the difficulties and limitations associated with the area, making the topic of intergenerational farm transfer a particularly salient issue.

(iii) *Hatherleigh – A Market Town*

A locally developed online-questionnaire, launched during January 2012, asked respondents ‘what do you think makes Hatherleigh special?’. The role of the market in Hatherleigh was clear amongst questionnaire respondents, described as “the life and soul of the place” and as “the nucleus of the town” from which “the people radiate out from it” (Questionnaire Respondent, Hatherleigh.net).

The market, described as “one of the few remaining all round markets in the West Country, if not England” (Questionnaire Respondent, Hatherleigh.net) is held every Tuesday, and “is a central point of commercial and social activity for the town and surrounding area” (West Devon Borough Council, 2005: 89). The market forms an integral part of Hatherleigh and the surrounding areas’ economy:

“Hatherleigh’s economy is driven, in the main, by its role as a small market town. There are many well established and successful businesses, many of which depend in vary degrees on the market, farming and/or tourism for their continued success” (Hatherleigh Community Plan, 2012: 32).

The idea that the market ‘set Hatherleigh apart’ from similar sized communities, was clear in the questionnaire responses. One respondent claimed: “having a market sets us out amongst all the other pretty little villages and towns and gives us a unique niche” (Questionnaire Respondent, Hatherleigh.net).

The prominence and value of the weekly farmers’ market denotes farming’s *integral* role in the area; *binding* agriculture and the community, in a way that differs from many other rural communities. One questionnaire respondent described how the market “*links communities up* and contributes to the social wellbeing of the surrounding villages” (Questionnaire Respondent, Hatherleigh.net, emphasis added).

(iv) Overcoming Foot-and-Mouth Disease

What also sets Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes out from Devon's other market towns, is how it notably overcame the 2001 foot-and-mouth crisis. According to the BBC (2005), "at the focus of the foot-and-mouth crisis of 2001, the market town of Hatherleigh was hit harder than most", but managed to doggedly "shrug off its troubles and a fresh confidence shines through today". Foot-and-mouth did not just simply affect the farming community in Hatherleigh, but attributable to the aforementioned relationship between the community and agriculture, affected the community as a whole. According to Farmers Weekly (2011) "almost everyone in this close-knit community was affected".

Research conducted in the area by Lobley *et al* (2003: ii) revealed what they described as "considerable personal pain" caused by the disease and control measures. Farmers and their families in the area only survived through "a combined strategy of working longer and harder, 'belt tightening' and risk aversion" (Lobley *et al*, 2003: ii). Lobley and colleagues also noted how many farmers had withdrawn from all forms of social contact and other activities which involved getting off the farm.

This historical context is fundamentally important in the context of this research, as suggested by Salamon (1992), cultural norms and values wield an important influence over farm family behaviour, including the succession process. Farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes have survived this adversity and this is likely to intensify familial attachment to the land.

5.2.6 Hatherleigh and Surrounding Parishes: Some Concluding Thoughts

This distinctive collection of experiences and characteristics, including the area's location in the Culm area, the locally renowned weekly farmers' market and, particularly *overcoming* of foot-and-mouth disease, demonstrates a unique significance and standing of agriculture to Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. This is likely to make succession a salient issue for farmers and potential successors. Some basic information about the chosen parishes can be found in Appendix 2.

5.3 The 1941-1943 National Farm Survey

Please note Section 5.3 is closely based on and draws directly on the author's previous publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (in press) 'The value of the 1941-1943 National Farm Survey as a method for engagement with farmers in contemporary research', *Area*, n/a: n/a. This article is included in Appendix 16.

As suggested in Section 5.1, the 1941-1943 NFS was a central resource during data collection, used initially as a tool to incentivise farmer participation in the research and, as a way of structuring and

initiating discussion during the interviews; the use of the NFS data and maps as ‘artefacts’ as they will herein be referred to, proved invaluable.

By way of introduction, the following discussion begins by presenting the history of the NFS and introduces its three key elements (Section 5.3.1). It continues by critically reviewing its limitations (Section 5.3.3) and previous applications in academic research (Section 5.3.4), before detailing exactly how this secondary data source was collected (Section 5.3.6) and used to create individual farm portfolios for participating farms (Section 5.3.7). It concludes by drawing on examples from a variety of fields to explicate why use of the Survey, as an ‘tool’ to support and structure the interview, was thought to be beneficial (Section 5.3.9).

5.3.1 The History of the National Farm Survey

A product of the urgent need to increase home food production after the start of the Second World War in September 1939, ‘County War Agricultural Executive Committees’ (CWAECs) were established by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, to which the authority to increase food production was delegated. Committees had the power to ‘organize land, reclamation, inspect farm businesses, instruct farmers on agricultural practice, allocate certain farm requisites, mobilize and direct gangs of workers, commission farm repairs, and where necessary, dispossess farmers in instances of especially poor land management’ (Jackson, 2005: 6). Despite some debate surrounding the respective merits of increasing levels of domestic production as opposed to stockpiling, CWAECs directed what became known as the plough-up campaign, which meant “land devoted to producing feedstuffs for animals would have to be diverted into production for direct human consumption” (Short *et al*, 2000: 32).

To assist with the plough-up campaign, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) initiated the first Farm Survey in the June of 1940, expecting the investigatory work to be completed by the end of July. However, by October 1940, the first Farm Survey had not yet been completed, and where visits had been carried out, there were grave concerns over the quality of and consistency between different counties. For example, Short *et al* (2000: 42) note how Pembrokeshire was recognised for the ‘fullness’ of the recording, whilst the survey utilised in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds merely took nine minutes.

In the December of 1940, the Ministry issued a Circular, thanking the CWAECs for their work in carrying out the survey (Short *et al*, 2000). However, they continued by stating the survey would be developed in a more standardised way, as a means of assisting in the immediate food security crisis, as well as providing further information as a basis for post-war planning.

On the 26th of April 1941 the CWAECs received instruction from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, setting out the scope and purpose of a more extensive survey, known as the NFS. Beginning

in the spring of 1941 and completed by the end of 1943, the NFS provided a wealth of data which primarily “assisted with emergency planning so that, where inefficiencies and mismanagement were seen to exist, agricultural resources could be husbanded to make a more effective contribution to the war effort” (Walford, 2007: 204). The survey, completed for *every* farm and holding of five acres or more, consisted of three main elements:

1. The Primary Return or Primary Farm Record
2. The 4 June 1941 Census Return, including:
 - The Census Return
 - The Horticultural Return
 - The Supplementary Form
3. The National Farm Survey Maps

5.3.2 The National Farm Survey Maps

“The farm boundary information on the maps gives an insight into the nature of farm layout, structure and ownership in the mid-20th century which will prove to be a benchmark for much future research” (Short *et al*, 2000: 159)

As part of the complete individual farm record, the CWAECs were ordered to mark the boundaries of each farm. It was hoped that by doing this “questions on such matters as altitude, slope, farm roads, etc., as part of the Primary Return could thus be omitted” (Short *et al*, 2000: 67). Delineation of boundaries were done using Ordnance Survey (OS) 25-inch sheets (1:5000) or the six-inch sheets (1:10560). Completion of the maps was fraught with difficulty because “the map sheets themselves were in short supply, the photographic reduction work took a great deal of time, and the transference of the farm areas and boundaries, with their references, to the maps was work of the most exacting nature” and as a result, for most counties “this was the last component of the National Farm Survey to be completed” (The National Archive, 2010: 4). The maps are regarded as “one of the finest and most valuable legacies of the NFS” (Short *et al*, 2000: 74).

Available since 1992, after a 50 year ‘closure’ period, NFS data is available at the *individual* farm level, and is undoubtedly “unparalleled in the level of detail which it contains” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 204). Understood by many as ‘another Domesday Book’ the Survey’s main advantage is “its provision of detailed agricultural and social information [...] can be tied down to specific farm maps” (Short *et al*, 2000: 143).

5.3.3 Limitations of the National Farm Survey

After becoming publically available in 1992, an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project, led by Professor Brian Short, assessed the value of the survey. Although the work ultimately concluded the Survey “remains a most amazing body of records” (Short *et al*, 2000: 236), they claim “the limitations of the Survey as an historical source are quite substantial”; limitations they say the “researcher has to come to grips with” (Short *et al*, 2000: 142).

As well as the unavoidable and ever familiar “knotty issue of land being located in one parish but returned in another, and the fragmented nature of some holdings” (Taylor *et al*, 2012: 79), Short *et al* (2000) summarise a number of issues, including:

- There are several inconsistencies within the data, such as the acreage of holdings found on the Primary Return and the Census Return;
- Data from the Supplementary Form appeared to be substantially less reliable than that from the other forms;
- Some farms do not have code numbers;
- The Census Returns for some farms are present without the Primary Record;
- There are regional and local inconsistencies in the completion of the forms;
- A proportion of records are missing, ambiguous, illegible or demonstrably incorrect.

Furthermore, Short *et al* (2000: 158) claim “like most important sources, [the maps] are flawed”, a small percentage of which are missing or damaged. However, they continue by suggesting “one of the surprising results of our analysis was the quantity of information, agricultural and non-agricultural, that could be found on the maps” (158).

5.3.4 Use of the NFS Data in Previous Research: A Review

Despite wide recognition of the NFS’s enormous potential for the study of many issues, it has only been utilised in a small number of, exclusively, historical investigations, with limited success, and arguably remains arguably underutilised given its “enormous potential for the study of many issues” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 205). The ensuing discussion explores and assesses previous applications of NFS data and maps, drawing on three contemporary investigations.

Firstly, Riley and Watkins (2006), note how little attention had been paid to the value of the NFS as a resource for environmental history, and contemporary landscape conservation. Riley and Watkins (2006) recognise the contemporary research and policy focus on the environmental effects of farming, and resultant efforts to reverse the damage caused by agriculture since the Second World War. It is with this in mind they suggest how the NFS data may be used to gain a clearer understanding of the character and management of the ‘traditional landscape’, describing how “the NFS may make an

important contribution in giving baseline data for the extent of such features in the mid-twentieth century” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 207). They asked, firstly, can NFS data and maps be used to reconstruct land use at the field level, and secondly, does the combination of NFS data with near-contemporary aerial photographs enhance this insight (Figure 5.4 and 5.5)? They attempted to answer these questions at the micro-scale, using three case study farms. This is explored here using the examples of Tipsgrove Farm (Herefordshire) and Castle Farm (West Sussex).

In the case of Tipsgrove Farm, Riley and Watkins found the usefulness of NFS data and maps in the reconstruction of land use at the field level, poor. Although they were able to be ‘fairly certain’ when identifying the nine acres of orchards, success was limited when trying to “‘place’ the 5.5 acres of different arable crops” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 209). Similarly, they are merely able to speculate that permanent grass is likely to be located in fields with ponds. They conclude, use of NFS data and maps alone “does not allow precise field-by-field land use to be identified securely” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 209), but report, the ability to “identify the precise land use of the majority of fields” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 210) when combined with near-contemporary aerial photographs. Given that Castle Farm was mainly a dairy farm consisting of grassland, Riley and Watkins (2006: 212) anticipated this should have made “identification of the land use of individual fields rather simple”, however, they discovered “in practice this farm is very difficult to interpret”, which they attribute to significant inconsistency between the farm area stated in the Census Return (100 acres) and the area stated in the Primary Return (121 acres). They conclude, the different areas “make it very difficult to use the data to reconstruct land use field-by-field” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 214). They suggest that the ‘missing’ land could be an area liable to flooding, however, they describe this as merely ‘guesswork’. Use of near-contemporary aerial photographs does aid what they describe as ‘guesswork’; it was possible to identify from the photo, how the areas nearer the river had not been cut for hay, a revelation that they suggest “*perhaps* backs the argument [...] that this is an area of rough grazing that might have been excluded from the area of the farm in the NFS” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 214, emphasis added). Although the aerial photograph did aid the interpretation for Castle Farm, Riley and Watkins ultimately suggest the interpretation was inconclusive.

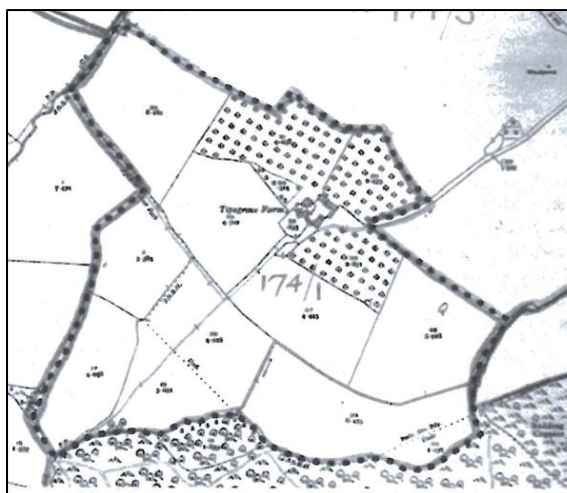


Figure 5.4 Tipsgrove Farm, NFS map, October 1942
 Source: Riley and Watkins (2006)

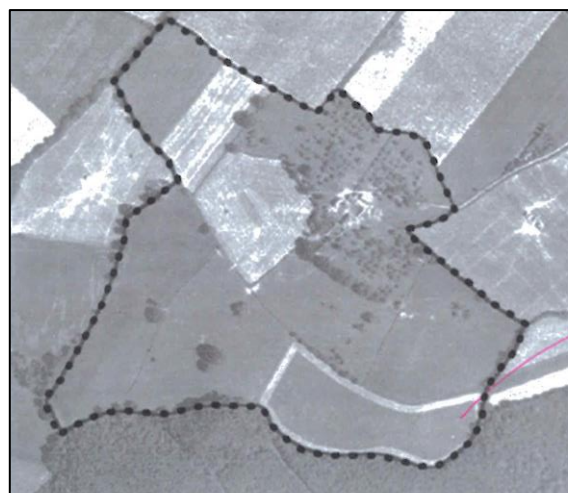


Figure 5.5 Tipsgrove Farm, RAF photo, July 1946
 Source: Riley and Watkins (2006)

As demonstrated by the preceding excerpts, Riley and Watkins' use of NFS in combination with near-contemporary aerial photographs to construct land use at the individual field level resulted in mixed success. They conclude, using NFS data and maps on their own, "it is in fact rather difficult to relate the crops and land uses to individual fields" (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 214). Use of NFS data and maps in conjunction with near-contemporary aerial photographs was more successful, but was still highly susceptible to what they term 'problems of interpretation'.

With the aim of building on Riley and Watkins' moderate success, Taylor *et al* (2012) focus on an entire parish, namely Hamsey, East Sussex. Unlike Riley and Watkins' aerial photographs, which were from a range of years, for example, the closest obtainable aerial photograph of Tipsgrove Farm was dated 11 July 1946, nearly 4 years after the creation of the NFS map for the holding, Taylor *et al* (2012) used aerial photographs taken by the Luftwaffe on 12 August 1940, only two years before much of the mapping and data collection. It was therefore "anticipated that the deployment here of a more nearly contemporary aerial-photograph might allow land use to be reconstructed with more certainty, but this proved not to be the case" (Taylor *et al*, 2012: 95). Aside from what Taylor *et al* (2012: 94) describe as "significant issues with the consistency of the NFS and 4 June Census information" and "the arbitrariness of the system of allocating farmland to the parish in which the farmer was resident" (95), the main limitation of the method was attributed to the aerial photographs pre-dating much of the plough-up campaign. With specific reference to Riley and Watkins' work, Taylor *et al* (2012: 95) claim their study "encountered similar difficulties".

In addition to the aforementioned research, concerned with the reconstruction of land use, Walford (2007: 217) used the NFS as "a statistical population of farms from which to trace subsequent changes in farm occupation using electoral registers". This allowed interesting conclusions about the survival rates of family farms over time, which he attributes to NFS classification, suggesting that "farmers

might have been more prone to become ‘non-survivors’ if they were classified as B or C”¹⁰ (Walford, 2007: 226) and “farms that were already large at the time of the NFS” were “potentially more likely to survive than smaller ones”. Walford (2007: 227) expected “that the survivability of occupiers on the NFS farms would be differentiated according to whether they held their farms as owners or tenants” but revealed that tenant farmers do not appear to have been any less likely to remain on their farms than those that were owner-occupiers. Although the results interestingly revealed a persistence of families to remain on the same farm, Walford (2007: 229) warns of “some uncertainty over the explanation” and recognises that “this analysis cannot hope to find explanations for why some farm families survived [...] whereas others could not be found immediately after the War”. Walford (2007: 229) concludes by warning how use of the NFS in this way is a “time-consuming and protracted process”.

In contrast to the ambitious work of Riley and Watkins, Taylor *et al* and Walford, Jackson (2005) used the NFS simply as ‘a window’ into farming in the parish of Powderham, Devon, in his descriptive micro-study. Although using the Survey to simply “shed light on the character of agrarian economy and society at a particular point in time” (Jackson, 2005: 5), Jackson *still* expresses some concern over the ‘inconsistency’ and ‘bias’ inherent to the Survey and warns that ‘reservation’ is needed when interpreting Survey data.

More recently, drawing on data from his earlier, larger research project (Walford, 2007), Walford (2013) used NFS data and maps, in combination with the Classification of Agricultural Land (MAFF, 1988) and British Geological Survey maps, to explore the extent of the plough-up campaign on landscape change in the South Downs. Although he recognised ‘certain deficiencies’ with the Survey data, including the difference in coverage (attributable to the varying diligence of the different CWAEC surveyors), Walford (2013) was able to confidently calculate, and spatially demonstrate using GIS, the impact of the plough-up campaign on the total area of cereals on farms in the West Sussex and East Sussex parishes, as well as the percentage of farmland ploughed-up at the individual farm level.

Despite the difficulty and uncertainty associated with use of the NFS to reconstruct farm history, Riley and Watkins (2006), Taylor *et al* (2012) and Walford (2007) all defend the value of NFS data and maps “at the small scale, where sufficient time and attention can be devoted to unravelling the intricacies of each individual farm” (Taylor *et al*, 2012: 95). Walford’s (2013: 42) evaluation of the potential of the NFS as a source for reconstruction of the past summarises the varying successes of its previous applications:

¹⁰ Each farm holding was given a classification grade from A-C (with A being the best, and C being the worst), based on the general condition and prospects of the farm. Where a B or C classification was given, reasons had to be selected from *old age*, *lack of capital* or *personal failings* and if *personal failings* were selected, details were required by the surveyor. Reasons offered generally included set terms, such as ‘Lack of ambition’, ‘Lack of initiative’ but more personal reasons were sometimes cited, including ‘Lazy’ or ‘Hopeless case’ (Short *et al*, 2000).

“Provided that a certain level of caution is exercised, the NFS can be regarded as providing a reasonably comprehensive and consistent survey across England and Wales where individual farms and farmers can be identified so that connections to subsequent sample surveys and to earlier, contemporary and later publicly available documents can be carried out. Nevertheless it remains impossible to compensate for missing or inaccurate information.”

5.3.5 A New Use of the NFS: The NFS as an Artefact

In view of Walford’s (2013) comments, it is not the intention here to deny the wealth of data and the unparalleled level of detail offered by the NFS, although as demonstrated in many of the above examples, use of the NFS as the central source for the precise reconstruction of the past remains somewhat of a ‘guessing game’, as well as a time consuming and logistically demanding process. It is therefore, *alongside* its “enormous potential [...] to provide a rich and informative social and environmental geography and history of mid-twentieth century agriculture” (Riley and Watkins, 2006: 215) its alternative use as an interview tool to simply incentivise participation and support the discussion of the past, the present and even the future is proposed.

Ultimately, the way in which this use of NFS data and maps differs to previous methods is how it is *not being used* to reconstruct, deduce or interpret, but instead is used, as a *basis* for engaging the respondent, and was used as a means of prompting discussion. As a result, it is not hindered by levels of internal inconsistency, exactness of figures and accuracy of holding delineation; arguably, these problems can even become a source of strength (see Section 5.3.9).

5.3.6 Collecting NFS Data and Maps

NFS data were obtained during a three day trip to the National Archive, in Kew, during May 2012. During this time NFS documents (MAF 32), including the **Primary Return**, **Census Return** and **Supplementary Form**, and **6-inch maps** (MAF 73)¹¹ for the Devon parishes of Hatherleigh, Iddesliegh, Monkokehampton, Broadwoodkelly and Winkleigh (see Section 5.2 for the discussion of why these parishes were chosen), were photographed using a high resolution camera and saved into individual parish files. Because of the problems of farms overlapping parish boundaries, documents and maps were obtained for surrounding parishes including Meeth, Exbourne and Jacobstowe, although time precluded obtaining the data for *all* surrounding parishes. Difficulties with gathering data in this way were generally associated with the large number of documents, which was increasingly protracted by the need to check the text on each photograph was in focus and therefore legible.

¹¹ Please note the Horticultural Return was not collected because there were typically no horticultural activity in the parishes concerned

5.3.7 Creating a Geographic Information System

According to Short *et al* (2000: 159) “the application of GIS is likely to prove an important means of dealing with the data in the NFS archive”. In short, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) “add value to spatial data” (Heywood, 2002: 12) and although Maguire *et al* (1991) documented a list of 11 different definitions, the Department of the Environment (1987) definition, as “a system for capturing, storing, checking, integrating, manipulating, analysing and displaying data which are spatially referenced to the Earth” (see Heywood, 2002: 12), offers an appropriate understanding of GIS in the context of this research. In the interests of reproducibility, the following discussion presents a technical account of the creation of the GIS, therefore a glossary of GIS terms is offered in Appendix 3.

Initially, OS maps of Devon in raster format at the 1:25,000 scale, and parish boundaries for the relevant parishes were downloaded and imported into the geodatabase. The maps and boundaries were assigned the same Geographic Coordinate System (GCS_WGS_1984) to ensure they aligned; this appeared as a contemporary OS map, with the relevant Devon parish boundaries overlain.

Preparing the NFS maps – an aesthetic problem

As recognised by Short *et al* (2000: 155) “many maps display some form of annotation or marking in the margins of the sheets” as well as other “printed marginalia such as dates or scales”. As well as this, the maps in the sample were never perfectly rectangular. To allow for the images to be joined as a contiguous map in the GIS, the border and associated marginalia had to be cropped out of the photograph to produce a perfectly rectangular image. Images were added to the geodatabase.

This sometimes resulted in the loss of small parts of the map and meant the maps did not join perfectly. However, the resultant gaps (Figure 5.6) did not mean significant loss of data – the gaps are small enough to confidently deduce the field boundaries.



Figure 5.6 Joining of the georeferenced NFS maps

Georeferencing the NFS maps

The 96 images of the NFS maps (in JPEG format) were imported into the system and georeferenced (a process of defining its existence in physical space), which used identified Ground Control Points (GCPs) such as road intersections or building corners to link the (photographs of the) Survey map to real world points. These points were used to match the Survey map to the real world and correctly orient the (photograph of the) Survey map. A total of 15 GCPs were identified for each of the 96 images (of Survey maps). The Root Mean Square (RMS) error was checked for consistency of the control points and high, anomalous or problematic points were checked and where relevant deleted and replaced. How well the image appeared to fit with the referent shapefile (OS map), was the ultimate assessment criteria.

This method differs to that of Walford's (2013) who used near-contemporary OS maps as a base layer from which to digitise the 1940s¹² farms. Here, instead, the use of a modern-day base layer from which to georeference the 1940s maps was chosen to ensure the digitised historical boundary could be presented to the farmer in relation to/projected on top of, modern day reference points and thus be easily identifiable to the farmer being interviewed.

Georeferencing was a time-consuming and protracted process. Identifying common control points, particularly in the less populated or 'built up' areas, often proved difficult, although Walford (2013) also recalled experiencing similar difficulties using near-contemporary OS maps.

¹² In the issue of brevity '1940s' represents the time of the 1941-1943 National Farm Survey

Short *et al*'s (2000) attempt at georeferencing NFS maps, resulted in moderate success. They were only able to 'confidently' georeference around 70 per cent of the map sheets. However, the problems they experienced were indicative of using a large, national sample; for example, 8 per cent could not be referenced because of the lack of a map, and the remaining 15 per cent were due to blank map sheets or simply not being able to locate the holdings. These problems were not present in the mid-Devon map sample. In fact, in a report to the Countryside Agency in 2006, Southall singled out Devon's maps (as well as Kent's) as "almost ideally suited to the construction of a Geographical Information System" (Southall, 2006: 9). Maps for the desired OS parcels were *all* present, and because of the (geographically) focussed nature of the study, were *all* able to be matched to referent locations (although as suggested, this was a time-consuming and sometimes demanding process which involved intricate examination of the OS maps, contemporary satellite projections and Survey maps).

Creating the vector versions of the 1940s farm boundaries

Vector versions of the 1940s farm boundaries were created for the participating farms. Having created a new feature class entitled '1940s Participating Farm Boundaries' and opened it for editing, polygons for the relevant individual farms were created, using the georeferenced Survey maps as a visual guide for positional reference. By digitising individual farm boundaries it allowed attribute data to be linked to the farm. For each participating farm, a select number of NFS data (listed in Section 5.3.8, below) from both the Primary Return and the Census Return, were added into the associated attribute table. The attribute table is used as a means of storing and organising individual farm data and attributing them to a real-world space.

5.3.8 The NFS as an Artefact: Creating Individual Farm Portfolios

Having 'captured' the relevant documents and associated NFS data, a select number of variables from the data were added to the individual farms, as created in the GIS. This enabled a small, but telling, snapshot of the 1940s farm to be printed 'at the click of a button', by simply selecting the desired farm on the GIS-map. This data, along with the individual farm map formed a historical 'farm portfolio', that was put together prior to each farm visit and utilised in each of the interviews. The variables used to create each farm portfolio, as well as their source document, are presented in Table 5.2. An example of a typical farm portfolio and its contents can be found in Appendix 4.

Although, the deployment of the NFS here, as simply a *basis* for discussion, is ultimately unencumbered by the inherent inconsistencies within the NFS data as documented by Short *et al* (2000), the accuracy of each variable was still an important consideration of the methodology design. It is therefore vital to consider these variables and their sources in turn.

Table 5.2

Attributes used and their sources

Attributes used	Source document
Farmer Surname	Primary Return and where necessary Census Return
Holding Name	
Tenure	Primary Return
Total Acreage of Crops and Grass, including Rough Grazings	Census Return
Total Number of Cattle and Calves	
Total Sheep and Lambs	
Total Pigs	
Total Poultry	
Total Goats	
Total Horses	
Total Number of Workers	

Across the five parishes, documents for 254 different holdings were obtained. For 199 of the total number of holdings, (78.4 per cent), *all* three documents, including the Census Return, Primary Return and Supplementary Form were available. This was similar to Short *et al*'s National Sample, where *all* three documents were available for 1136 out of 1450 holdings (74.3 per cent). For the remaining 55 holdings (21.6 per cent) *only* the Census Return and the Supplementary Form were available.

The Holding Name and Farmer Name

As well as addressing one of the central aims of this research, namely, to understand how succession has shaped land occupancy in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, the *Holding Name* and *Farmer Name* data was used to identify who was farming the identified holdings in the 1940s.

Holding names were drawn initially from the Primary Return which contained the 'Name of holding', as opposed to the Census Return which did not ask for the holding name, and only contained the farmer's address in the addressograph, which was often out of date (Short *et al*, 2000) and contained the owner or tenant's address, which was not always the same as the holding (although it often was). Farmer names were drawn from the Primary Return, where they were often recorded in more detail (including full Christian names). However, as suggested above, for 55 of the holdings across the five parishes, the Primary Return was not available, therefore the printed addressograph on the Census Return was used to identify both the holding and farmer names. On 7 occasions (2.8 per cent), handwriting on the Primary Return was illegible, many of which were done in pencil which had faded, therefore the address on the Census Return had to be used.

Size of Holding

The acreage of holdings is a key element of any analysis using the NFS (Short *et al*, 2000). The acreage was used to build a basic understanding of the farm during the 1940s which was compared to the current farm acreage and relayed to the current farmer and where applicable, potential successor, as an entry point from which to prompt discussion.

Its use did not ignore the salutary warnings raised in Short's analysis, who claimed "it is the level of internal consistency of the acreage which comprises the most substantial reason for exercising caution" (Short *et al*, 2000: 140). Internal inconsistency associated with the acreage of holdings found on the Primary and Census Returns is one of the most significant problems with the Survey data. In fact, in their analysis of their national sample, Short *et al* revealed that Primary Return acreage and the sum of total crops and grass and rough grazings on the Census Return, were only exactly the same on a mere 38.9 per cent of occasions, 64.5 per cent were within 10 per cent of each other, and 80.3 per cent within 20 per cent. Consistency of the Farm Survey data for Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes was comparable, if not better than the levels found in Short's National, Sussex and Midlands Samples (Table 5.3):

Table 5.3

Comparison of samples: Consistency of acreage declared on Census Return and Primary Return

	The same	Within 10%	Within 20%
Hatherleigh and Surrounding Parishes	38.9	64.5	80.3
Short <i>et al</i> 's Sussex Sample	30.2	56.0	67.5
Short <i>et al</i> 's Midlands Sample	42.7	64.7	73.8
Short <i>et al</i> 's National Sample	33.9	60.2	71.0

Source: Short *et al* (2000)

Although levels of internal consistency were comparable, if not better, for Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, questions over the accuracy of the different acreage figures remain. However, as already suggested, for 55 of the holdings across the five parishes, the Primary Return was not available, and as noted by Short *et al* (2000: 175), acreage comes from a section on the Census Return completed by farmers themselves and is therefore more likely to be accurate. With these factors in mind, the acreage figure from the Census Return was used in the farm portfolios.

Tenure and Number of Total Workers

Tenure and the *Number of Total Workers* were used to further develop this picture of the individual farm. A summary of this information was intended to provoke thoughts about the farm as it is now. The total number of workers is the sum of items 35-41 on the Census Return; however, Short *et al*

(2000) report that 3.2 per cent of totals did not equal the sum of the preceding seven items. This was not the case for Hatherleigh and the surrounding parishes, where only 0.8 per cent of the total number of workers did not equal the sum of the preceding seven fields (Table 5.4). The total number of workers was used despite this minor uncertainty.

Table 5.4

Comparison of samples: occurrence of inconsistency in declared number of workers

	Percentage
Hatherleigh and Surrounding Parishes	0.8
Short <i>et al</i> 's Sussex Sample	0.1
Short <i>et al</i> 's Midlands Sample	2.9
Short <i>et al</i> 's National Sample	3.2

Source: Short *et al* (2000)

5.3.9 The National Farm Survey Maps and Data as an 'Artefact'

Farm portfolios were initially presented to the farmer and the potential successor, and subsequently integrated into the interview questions (Section 5.5.5 demonstrates explicitly how this was designed). The *motivation* for choosing to use the NFS farm portfolios in this way, including previous deployment of similar artefacts in research, is critically discussed below. A reflection on the success of the deployment of the NFS in this research is offered in the conclusion (Chapter 9).

Initially, use of the NFS maps and data or 'artefacts' as they will herein be referred to as, were used to assist the recruitment of participants by incentivising participation in the research. It was hoped that, by being able to offer participating farms the historical portfolio the interview would be, to some extent, mutually beneficial. Participants responded well to the incentive and use of the NFS in this way and it forms an integral part of the method; a small number of participants even contacted me to be involved in the research, because of their interest in the Survey data and maps. Harper (2002) observed a similar response having introduced aerial and historical farm photographs to interviews with dairy farmers in upstate New York. He observed, as was the case in this research, how "suddenly previously taciturn farmers had a great deal to say" (Harper, 2002: 21). It was hoped that the initial interest participants had in the NFS data and maps would resonate in their subsequent engagement.

Having used the resource to rouse interest in the research, the NFS was used to explicitly structure the opening question (see Section 5.5.5). There are a number of reasons it was chosen to use the NFS in this way. Firstly, by personalising the interview questions, it was hoped, rather than being just

‘another participant’, answering a set of standardised questions, the participants would feel prioritised – the interview was about *them* and *their* farm, with the intention of putting the participant at ease about the interview process from the very start. Reflecting on their own interviews with business owners and managers, including those in farming, Healey and Rawlinson (1993) suggest that starting an interview on the right note is paramount, with implications for participant openness throughout the interview. Parenthetically, personalisation of the interview questions with information about the farm history, such as the owner at the time of the Survey, was intended to increase interest in and therefore participant thinking about and engagement with the questions; similarly, Mishler (1991) observed how, personalisation of interview questions ‘unsurprisingly’ yielded more detailed, narrative accounts.

Although with specific reference to the use of photographs during interviews (although can easily be extended to support the use of the NFS data and maps), Carlsson (2001: 125) suggests how such objects “can serve as a communication bridge between strangers”, aiding the development of rapport between the participant and the researcher. Furthermore, having the farm portfolios available during the interview was intended to deflect the focus away from the participant, making the process of the interview less confrontational, as well as giving participants something, physically, to construct their answers and ideas around – which Carlsson (2001: 138) claims further creates a positive atmosphere, ameliorating the asymmetrical power relation between the interviewer and the respondent and allows them to “more easily speak ‘in their own voices’”.

Furthermore, it was hoped that even the simple verification of information provided by the Survey, would prompt participants to truly engage with the topic, and perhaps stimulate points and discussion that may not have been mentioned without use of the Survey. Although referring more widely to farm objects, equipment and memorabilia, Riley (2010: 656) identifies how such material objects “served as prompts to discussion and recollection, and in particular allowed reference to be made (both by the interviewer and the interviewee) to things that do not fit easily into narrative accounting”, facilitating “an infiltration of stories, anecdotes, and revelations”. Similarly, Harper (2002) who used historical and aerial farm photographs during interviews with farmers observed how such artefacts “mine deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews’ which ‘leads to deep and interesting talk” (Harper, 2002: 23). The ability of artefacts to “aid the narrative being created” (Harvey and Riley, 2007: 398) was a central stimulus behind integrating the NFS into the interview process in this way.

Although with specific reference to photographs as a method in anthropology, Collier and Collier (1986: 99) recognise “photographs can function as a starting and reference points for the discussions of the *familiar* or the *unknown*” (emphasis added). This can be easily extended to support the use of NFS data as an artefact, as it is applicable to both those with limited or no knowledge of the farm and

its occupation at the time of the Survey, as well as those with extensive knowledge and understanding of the farm and its occupation during the 1940s. This is a particularly attractive feature of using the NFS maps and data in this way, as the post-War period was a period of rapid agricultural change, and in view of the “considerable movement of farm families from holding to holding” that occurred between 1900 and 1960 as observed by Williams (1963: 38) it was anticipated that a (significant) number of participating farm families would not necessarily have familial connections to that specific holding, and yet, the NFS data would still be of interest to them.

Perhaps the most appealing feature of using the NFS in the way deployed in this research is the irrelevance of Survey inconsistency to the process and associated outcomes. Specifically, errors in the NFS data were anticipated to simply form a natural deviation in the conversation leading participants to perhaps justify why this would not have been the case, and in doing so, perhaps offer further information, that may not have been volunteered if the NFS data had been correct. Just as Harvey and Riley (2007: 398) observed how “artefacts may take the narrative into less immediately obvious directions which unveil important and often hidden social histories”, used as an artefact, the Survey’s inherent problems can arguably become a source of strength.

5.4 The Use of Local Informants

In order to develop a broad understanding of how succession has shaped land occupancy in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes (in line with Objective 1, see Table 1.1) and give a general insight into the farm family history of the area before further data collection work, a series of informal discussions with key local informants were conducted using a combination of NFS data and contemporary farm directory information. This approach is loosely based on the *key informant technique* associated with the work of Tremblay (1957). According to Fetterman (2008: 3), key informants “are individuals who are articulate and knowledgeable about their community” and typically “help to establish a link between the researcher and the community”. Typically, qualitative researchers rely on a small number of key informants (Fetterman, 2008).

The two key informants used in the research were longstanding residents of the parishes within which the research is focused (Table 5.5). As suggested by Fetterman (2008: 3), “the competency of key informants is often measured by length of time they have been in the community”, making the two informants selected well placed.

Table 5.5

Key informant: pen portraits

Informant	Description
<i>Key Informant 1</i>	Key Informant 1 is a 3 rd generation farmer in Hatherleigh, who has been incredibly involved in the local community throughout his life. Involved in YFC from a young age, he later became an NFU representative at both local and national level. Now in his eighties, he remains incredibly involved in the local community.
<i>Key Informant 2</i>	Now in his early seventies, Key Informant 2 is a local farmer's son, who was born in Iddesleigh and has lived in the local area for most of his life. His roles in the area have included working in a local fish and chip shop, a local postman, fireman, builder, market worker, wedding photographer and councillor. Key Informant 2 has also written a book that covers some of the history of Hatherleigh and surrounding areas.

Using the list of 1940s farms and their owners and/or tenants obtained from the NFS, which had been added to a spreadsheet, an initial online search of the farm name and its current owners was performed. Where the farm was identified and the details available, the name of the current occupier was added to an additional column in the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was printed and taken to a succession of meetings with the key local informants, during which they were asked what happened to each of the 1940s farms *i.e. whether they knew if the farm remained in the same family and if so, how it had passed through the family, and similarly, if it had passed out of the family, how and why (and even when) this occurred*. The local informants were incredibly attuned to what had happened to a large number of the farms and farm families over the 70+ year period since the Survey, often recalling the farm family histories in great detail. There were of course a (small) number of farms that neither of the local informants did not recall what had happened to or had no recollection or knowledge of in the first place. Whilst the key informants were confident in their knowledge and recall and their suggestions were cross-referenced with each other's, as well as the findings of the online search, Fetterman (2008) warns how memory failure and distortion are key drawbacks of this kind of reliance on key informants. Therefore the subsequent findings, which are presented using the GIS in Section 6.1.1, are perhaps best understood as an *indication* of occupational changes in the area, but primarily represented an opportunity to build an understanding of the area and some of its family farming history, which proved a useful precursor to interviews with farmers and their potential successors.

5.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interest in farmers' and potential successors' experiences, perceptions, opinions and intentions, combined with a desire to cover specific themes and topics meant semi-structured interviews proved preferable. Interviews are recognised as a central resource through which contemporary social science engages with the issues concerning it (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Driven by the desire for a rigorous and in-depth insight into the succession process and the factors that influence succession, as well as the need to give voice to the potential successor, a large part of the method was designed in a way that allows for significant respondent input. Although, a brief

structured section was employed to establish rudimentary but nonetheless essential socio-economic information, the bulk of the data was gained through more open and less-standardised questions.

5.5.1 Advantages of Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews proved preferable as they allow for the adjusting of questions through changes in wording where appropriate and impromptu probe or follow up questions which are incredibly valuable when generating knowledge inductively. The use of an interview guide, allowed the interview to cover specific topics, themes and areas. Use of the semi-structured interview was particularly fitting given the desire to further develop understanding of the succession process that has been limited by the dominance of questionnaires in the field. Unlike more structured methods, the focus is on the respondents' understandings and experiences and is *not* constrained by the desire to "organise the beliefs, experience and perspectives of research subjects into preset categories" (Kelly, 2010: 309). For Cloke *et al* (2008: 151) one, of many reasons, for "using interviews lies in the desire [...] to 'give voice to' others as an integral part of the research process" (see Philo, 1992). The semi-structured interview proved fitting because it gave a voice to the, thus far, silent and subsumed successor.

It is widely regarded that intergenerational farm transfer is "*the* prime objective for many family businesses" (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 94); a lot is at stake. Talking about succession *is* emotive and poignant; tied up with knotty issues such as fear of mortality, death, loss of identity, duty to previous generations, change and so on, that is glossed over in the wider literature. The flexibility of the interview means it is able to be sensitive to the respondent. Despite the wealth of ethical considerations associated with interviews on a potentially emotive topic, Dunn (2008: 80) notes that the interview process has the potential to empower and respect respondents by "valuing and treating the informant's view [...] with respect". Interestingly, the interview allows the researcher to "interpret the meanings of what is said as well as how it is said" including the vocalisation, facial expressions and body language (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 29). As well as this, audio recording of the interview limits (although does not completely eliminate) the required amount of note taking, which "eliminates the interruption of constant note taking and allows normal conventions of social interaction such as eye contact between interviewer and respondent" (Kelly, 2010: 313), behaviours that encourage trust and rapport which can increase the quality of data obtained.

5.5.2 Disadvantages of Semi-Structured Interviews

Despite its wealth of virtues and its prevalence in the social sciences, the use of semi-structured interviews as a method is also subject to numerous critiques.

Perhaps the biggest critique of the interview is the ‘interviewer effect’. A belief that the data produced is influenced by what the interviewer wants to hear. In terms of this research, social desirability was assumed to wield an important influence. It is widely accepted that the process of succession in agriculture is largely shaped by social and cultural expectation (Salamon, 1992), for example Price (2010) describes a “deep attachment to the family story they [the successor] feel[s] bound to continue”, a loyalty that could mean “information they provide will be a formal and guarded account, bearing little resemblance to the more realistic version of events” (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 68). However, reassuring the participants of confidentiality and anonymity (see Section 5.6.1), plus the researcher’s personal distance from the farming community were thought to, in part, alleviate these issues.

Despite the freedom offered to the respondent during the semi-structured interview, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is undoubtedly characterised by a significant power imbalance. As already proposed, use of the NFS documents provided the focus of attention, eased the ‘pressure’ on and empowered the respondent as the ‘subject’ of the interview, and thus ameliorated the asymmetrical power relation between the interviewer and the respondent.

For Denscombe (2007: 203) “the impact of the interviewer and of the context means that consistency and objectivity are hard to achieve”. In other words, data collected through interviews, to some extent, are unique, attributable to the unique exchange between *that* interviewer, *that* interviewee and *that* specific context and are thus not a reproducible at another time or by another researcher, ultimately rendering them unreliable. Although there is significant literature on how to maximise the reliability of the qualitative interview, it is important to note that “complete reliability is not attainable” (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 53).

The critiques of the interview are not confined to the interview process, but extend beyond this into the data analysis, these limitations are discussed in Section 5.7.

5.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews: Sampling

The names and contact details of potential participant families were obtained from my key informants, whom I had asked to suggest farm families for whom succession were likely to be a relevant or salient issue. A database of their names and contact details was created and I initially wrote to them all to introduce myself and suggest I may be in contact regarding my research in the near future (a copy of the letter is presented in Appendix 5). I subsequently phoned them to ask them for their participation and where they agreed, we arranged a suitable time and place. The ability to reference the names of the local informants with whom I had been working with when talking to potential participants proved invaluable. As did the short introduction to my work I had published in the Hatherleigh *Parish Pump* – the local newsletter delivered to Hatherleigh and many of the surrounding parishes (see Appendix

1), which many participants referenced. Similarly instrumental was the offer of the NFS data for their respective farms, which many farmers were enthused by.

Although keen to interview *both* the incumbent farmer and where identified, the potential successor, an initial interview date was arranged with the farmer, having anticipated the farmer may be protective over their potential successor(s) i.e. their sons, daughters and grandchildren. Only after having developed rapport and trust with the farmer, i.e. after their interview, was the possibility of interviewing their nominated potential successor explored and where possible, arranged for a later date. As outlined in Chapter 4, there were no potential successor criteria, and it was up to the farmer to nominate their identified potential successor.

This deliberate decision to conduct the farmer and potential successor interviews separately reinforced the desire to give the potential successor their own ‘voice’ and was in part a response to the expectations and pressures many potential successors experience (see Price, 2010) and the anticipated influence this could have had on interview responses if the farmer and potential successor(s) were interviewed together i.e. the potential successor may feel the need to answer in a way the farmer is expecting him/her to. Given the sometimes huge social and cultural expectation on potential successors to succeed to the farm (Salamon, 1992), and to encourage openness and honesty, respondents were reassured their answers were given in the strictest confidence and would be anonymised.

A total of 43 interviews were conducted across 29 farms in the case study area. Interviews were conducted with 26 farmers and 19 potential successors, and as intended, in all but two cases, the farmer and the potential successor(s) were interviewed separately. Where this was not possible (on Farm 1 and Farm 12) it was due to time constraints and the availability of the potential successor; in the case of Farm 1 the potential successor was only available to ‘drop in’ during the interview, and in the case of Farm 12, the farmer and potential successor requested to be interviewed together because of time constraints. Rather than lose the opportunity to talk to these potential successors, the decision was taken to continue the interview with the farmer and the potential successor together.

Despite the intention to interview *both* the incumbent and the potential successor associated with each farm, for 14 farms this was not possible. One farmer simply did not have a nominated potential successor, three farmers had children that were too young to participate in the research (participants had to be aged 18 or over – see Section 5.6), and unfortunately, an additional seven had potential successors who although eligible, were unwilling to participate or unavailable at the time of the research, typically due to work commitments associated with the farm or off-farm work. On a further three farms (Farm 7, 8 and 10), only potential successors were interviewed – in two of these cases their respective fathers/farmers were unwilling to participate in the interview, and in the additional case, the father had passed away.

On Farm 8, 2 potential successors were identified and therefore interviewed (separately).

Interviews with both the incumbent and the nominated potential successor were possible on a total of 15 out of the 29 farm holdings, resulting in a total of 28 interviews. Although the intention was to get this two-generational view wherever a potential successor had been identified, it was not always possible, limited predominantly by potential participants' work commitments as well as general unwillingness to participate in the research. However, interviews with *just* the farmer or *just* the potential successor(s) make an equally valuable contribution to the overall body of data and subsequent analysis.

Although the farmer interviews were conducted with the 'principal operator', as reckoned by my local informants, and thus were typically male, their wives often contributed, sometimes significantly to the interview and their contributions were included in the interview transcripts and analysis (an advantage of conducting interviews at the farm, see Section 5.5.4 below). Table 5.6 presents a summary of the interviews conducted at each farm.

Table 5.6
Overview of interviews conducted

Total Farms	Total farmers interviewed	Total potential successors interviewed	Total interviews per farm	Notes / Details of interview
1	1	1	1	Interview conducted simultaneously with both the farmer and potential successor due to availability of participants
2	2	2	2	Separate interviews conducted with both the farmer and the potential successor(s)
3	3	3	2	
4	4	4	2	
5	5	5	2	
6	6	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer; potential successor was too young to participate in the research
7	-	6	1	Interview conducted with the potential successor; the farmer was unwilling/unavailable
8	-	7 8	2	Interview conducted with the potential successor(s); the farmer was unwilling/unavailable
9	7	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer; potential successor was unwilling/unavailable
10	-	9	1	Interview conducted with the potential successor(s); the farmer was unwilling/unavailable
11	8	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer; potential successor was unwilling/unavailable
12	9	10	1	Interview conducted simultaneously with both the farmer and potential successor due to availability of participants
13	10	11	2	Separate interviews conducted with both the farmer and the potential successor
14	11	12	2	
15	12	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer; potential successor was too young to participate in the research
16	13	-	1	
17	14	13	2	Separate interviews conducted with both the farmer and the potential successor
18	15	14	2	
19	16	15	2	
20	17	16	2	
21	18	17	2	
22	19	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer only; no potential successor had been identified
23	20	18	2	Separate interviews conducted with both the farmer and the potential successor
24	21	19	2	
25	22	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer; potential successor was unwilling/unavailable
26	23	-	1	
27	24	-	1	
28	25	-	1	
29	26	-	1	Interview conducted with the farmer only; potential successor was too young to participate in the research
29 farms	26 farmer interviews	19 potential successor interviews	43 interviews	

5.5.4 The Choice of Interview Location

It was decided to give participants a choice of where they would like to be interviewed and it was emphasised that the researcher was happy to visit the farm, for the simple reason that it was anticipated farmers would be busy and would be more willing to participate if the process did not involve travelling away from the farm. Similarly, Riley (2010: 653) suggests how conducting interviews on the farm means convenience for participants, which he suggests is particularly important in farm-based research, as farms are “often geographically isolated, making travelling to alternative venues logistically difficult for respondents”. A further benefit of visiting the farm is that the participant is in a familiar setting during the interview (Riley, 2010; Patton, 2002).

Furthermore, although ‘farmers’ were typically (although not exclusively) male, the location of the interview meant that where an interview had initially been arranged with the male farmer, their wives were able to (sometimes extensively) contribute to the interview narrative. Riley (2010) observed a similar benefit of locating the interview in the farm house, during his work with farm families.

As Elwood and Martin (2000: 653) describe, the interview location can also provide valuable opportunity for important supplementary observations which can generate entirely new information, and provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the issues being discussed. With specific reference to one of their research projects into community activism, they describe the value of the interview location:

“Being able to sit in Denise’s house [...] made the words Denise had spoken into my tape recorder come alive. The rootedness of this family in their neighbourhood, an essential detail in explaining Denise’s activism, was conveyed as much by the location of the interview as by the tape recorded words of the interview itself” (Elwood and Martin, 2000: 653)

By conducting interviews at the farm, Riley (2010) observed how it “served to clarify particular points”, giving the example of how in one particular case, the farmer’s wife, was able to produce a purchase receipt she had kept, to identify a particular date. Riley (2010: 655) also observes further value in objects that are typically found around the farm house, such as “pictures of the farm, farm animals, and farm workers, or horse brasses and older pieces of farm equipment turned into household ornaments”, which in a similar way to the use of the NFS in the interview process (see Section 5.3.9), he recalls, have potential to prompt and stimulate further discussion.

Whilst the majority of interviews were conducted at the farm, a high percentage of which were conducted at the kitchen table, there were a small number of occasions where, at the participant’s request, the interview was conducted elsewhere. Specifically, due to his work schedule, one potential

successor interview was conducted whilst sat in a car in the grounds of the farm and two of the potential successors requested they were interviewed at a coffee shop close to their college, whilst they were on their lunch hour.

5.5.5 Interview Content and Structure

A repertoire of different questions for both the farmer and potential successor interviews were developed to contain a catalogue of core and follow up questions and integrate the use of the NFS data and maps into the interviews. With the exception of the questions about the farm and the participant, which were closed questions with the aim of gathering demographic information, open questions were arranged according to broad themes or titles. Although a set list of questions was taken into each interview (see Appendix 6 and 7), generally, only one or two questions were explicitly asked from each theme and the dialog developed naturally from there; the set list of questions merely acted as a checklist and guide to keep the interview 'on topic', but often questions were not limited to those listed.

Each interview started by thanking participants for agreeing to participate in the research, outlining the purpose of the research and their role in it. Participants were reminded the contents of the interview would remain confidential and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

The Farmer

Questions were arranged in chronological order, starting with the NFS data and maps as a basis from which to ask about how the current farmer came to be 'the farmer' and their own experience of succession, before enquiring as to the current state of the farm and finishing by asking about the future of the farm, in terms of succession and the influence of the food security agenda. It was hoped that arranging the questions in chronological order would aid respondents' thought process, rather than jumping from the contemporary to the past and back again.

Interviewees were asked about the farm, themselves, their own experience of succession, succession status, the importance of identifying a successor, their identified successor, farm business development, the prospects of farming as a career, understandings of food security and their plans for the future.

(i) Their Own Experience of Succession

Farmers' own experiences of succession were explored by asking them, how, in the context of the farm's history, based on the NFS, they came to be the farmer on the holding. This typically prompted them to talk about who they took over from, the timescales involved and

details about the transition. Finally, participants were asked what influenced their decision to farm and the extent to which their family's time on the land (if applicable) had influenced this decision. Where the same family was present on the farm at the time of the Survey, the map was presented and used to initiate this question.

(ii) *The Farm and The Farmer*

Rudimentary, but nonetheless essential questions were asked to create a basic picture of the farm, including the size, type, and economic situation of the farm, as well as the number of farm workers. The farmer was also asked to outline the contemporary holding on an OS map, to enable the contemporary farm boundary to be digitised. The farmer was also asked their age, role in the farm, and about their educational qualifications.

(iii) *Succession Status*

Farmers were asked whether they had identified a successor, which typically prompted them, with little encouragement to talk about, who their potential successor is, their relation to the farmer, age and gender, and whether they had a succession plan. Where succession had been ruled out, farmers were asked why this was the case. Having established the succession status of the farm, farmers were asked, where applicable, how, if at all, identification of a successor has prompted any changes to the farm business. The NFS map and contemporary map were used as a way of asking about changes since identification of a potential successor.

(iv) *Role of the Potential Successor*

Where a potential successor had been identified or remained undecided, farmers were asked whether the potential successor currently worked on the farm. Farmers were asked to describe 'who does what' on a typical day, including who is in charge of different aspects of the farm.

(v) *The Importance of Identifying a Successor*

Farmers were asked how important successor identification was to them; where farm families had been on the land before or at the time of the NFS maps and data were referred to in the question.

(vi) *The Prospects of Farming as a Career*

Farmers were asked about the prospects farming as a career today, compared with when they were considering entering farming and they typically offered why this was the case. Farmers were given a series of accessible academic and political quotes (see Appendix 8), which depict the future of farming as being an incredibly positive and attractive opportunity for

future farmers. Having read through them, farmers were asked to what extent they agreed with them. This examined whether the ‘academic’ idea that the food security agenda is creating a renaissance in agriculture (see Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012), is reified amongst the farming community.

(vii) *Understandings of the Food Security Agenda*

Farmers were asked what they understood food security to mean. The formal definition of food security, from the Global Food Security group, was then introduced and farmers were asked, generally, what they think the imperative will mean for the farming industry and more specifically, what it will mean, for their potential successors where relevant.

The Potential Successor

Interview questions for the successor were also arranged in chronological order. Respondents were asked about themselves, whether they intend to succeed to the farm, the influence of their family’s time on the land and of the food security agenda on their decision to farm or not farm and the prospects of farming as a career. The NFS maps were used as a starting point for the potential successor to talk about what has influenced their decision to farm or not farm.

(i) *The Potential Successor and Their Intentions*

The potential successor was asked their age and about their educational qualifications. They were also asked whether they intended to succeed to the farm and about the details of their decision, such as when they decided and how, if at all, it had been ‘agreed’ with the farmer and other members of the farming family, if applicable.

(ii) *Influences, including Family’s Time on the Land*

Potential successors were asked generally about what had influenced their decision, before they were asked specifically about the following influence of their family’s ‘time of the land’ on their decision to succeed to the farm. Where the same family was present on the farm at the time of the Survey, the map was presented and used to initiate this question.

(iii) *The Prospects of Farming as a Career*

Like farmers, potential successors were given a series of accessible academic and political quotes (see Appendix 8), which depict the future of farming as being an incredibly positive and attractive opportunity for those in the industry. Having read through them, they were asked to what extent they agreed with them. This examined whether the ‘academic’ idea that

the food security agenda is creating a renaissance in agriculture (see Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012), is reified amongst the farming community.

(iv) *Understandings and Influence of the Food Security Agenda*

Potential successors were then asked what they understood food security to mean. Following their definition, a formal definition of food security (from the Global Food Security group) was introduced and they were asked, generally, what they think the imperative will mean for the farming industry and more specifically, what it will mean, for their future in farming.

(v) *Current Role on the Farm*

Where the potential successor was working on the farm, they were asked to describe ‘who does what’ on a typical day, including who is in charge of different aspects of the farm. Potential successors currently working on the farm were asked about any periods of formal training undertaken and/or planned, and how they felt their experiences would prepare them for farming in the future. Where potential successors were not working on the farm, they were asked about any periods of farm work and formal training they had undertaken and/or planned and how they felt their experiences would prepare them for farming.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical guidelines informing this research originate from the University of Exeter’s *Ethics Policy* and before arranging interviews, approval had to be obtained from the College of Social Science and Internal Studies’ Ethics Committee.

A *Proposal for consideration by SSIS Ethics Committee* ‘Ethics Proposal Form’ was completed (Appendix 9), detailing what the research would involve, including a synopsis of the research, the proposed methods, the voluntary and informed nature of participation, an assessment of possible participant and researcher harm and issues surrounding data protection and storage. Approval was granted in October 2012 (see Appendix 10 for the ‘Certificate of Ethical Approval’), granting the researcher approval to interview farmers and potential successors, aged 18 and over.

There were several ethical considerations associated with this research, concerning the farmers and potential successors interviewed, the key local informants and the researcher. A more detailed account of the ethical considerations is presented in the ‘Ethics Proposal Form’ (Appendix 9). The *main issues* of confidentiality, anonymity and possible harm and how they were upheld during the data collection are summarised below.

5.6.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Given the emotive, sensitive and personal nature of family farm succession, confidentiality and anonymity formed a central consideration for this method and the subsequent data analysis and presentation.

As was expounded in Section 5.5.3, farmer and potential successor interviews were conducted separately. Whilst this decision was taken to give the potential successor opportunity to talk freely and honestly about their intentions, feelings and experiences, away from the potentially expectant farmer, and thus forms an important and unique feature of this research, it also heightened the challenge of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, meaning narratives had to be anonymised in a way that meant farmers would not be able to identify potential successors' narratives, and vice versa. Furthermore, anonymity of participants when working in such a specific geographical locality was also an issue that was closely considered. It was decided, and made clear to participants before, during and after the interview, that unique events or characteristics would be removed entirely or generalised as to preserve anonymity. Participants were given examples of the way in which data was likely to be anonymised.

Although participants were assured that every effort would be made to anonymise interview data, they were warned of the limits to the confidentiality offered. If for example, an interview or observation had revealed that a participant or other identified person is in *significant and immediate* danger, the researcher would have been obliged to break confidentiality. If the researcher deemed this necessary, the participant will be notified, unless doing so would actually increase risk to those involved. These limits were clearly explained in the consent form (see below).

5.6.2 Possible Harm

The issue of participant harm was another significant issue in this research and was given significant consideration. The biggest threat to participants in this research was the potential for psychological harm or distress. The topic of succession and intergenerational transfer can be incredibly emotive; farming families can have strong emotional attachments to the land and particular expectations about the future of the farm and talking about succession can involve talking about loved ones who have since passed away, and even confronting ideas of one's own mortality. This meant delicate handling of certain issues that arose in the each interview. For this reason, it was decided that participants should be of 18 years or older to be involved in the research. To prepare the respondents for this potential issue, the information sheet clearly outlined the nature of the topic and some of the potential topics for discussion and these issues were reiterated, verbally at the start of the interview. During the interview the researcher was also sensitive to the potential for psychological harm, holding back on certain follow-up questions where it was evident that participants were finding/or are likely to find the

topic challenging, and letting the participant offer as much information as they felt comfortable with in certain instances.

5.6.3 Consent and Information for Participants Form

Immediately before the interview farmers and/or potential successors were given an 'Interview Consent Form' (see Appendix 11), which contained information about the research, funding, use of the data, contact details for myself and my supervisors, information on confidentiality, anonymity, their right to withdraw and general advice for participants. Participants were also advised the interview would be digitally recorded on a dictaphone. Participants were asked to tick and sign the form to give consent *before* the interview began and were given a copy of the form to keep for their own records. They were verbally reminded of the key messages from the 'Interview Consent Form' again before the interview questions began, and in some cases, where necessary were reminded of confidentiality and anonymity during the interview.

5.6.4 Researcher Positionality

Researcher 'positionality' has been identified as a central component in the qualitative research and refers to the potential impact of the researcher's own characteristics, or their 'position', in relation to their research subjects, on the process of data collection (see Chiseri-Strater, 1996). Some aspects of researcher positionality are culturally ascribed, such as gender or race, and others such as experiences or family background are more subjective (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). It is important to be aware of how these various 'positions' have the potential to shape the research process (Roulston, 2010).

Researcher 'positionality' and its impact on data collection in the farming community was an important methodological consideration. Aspects of the researcher's identity, specifically being female and under 25 years old and thus physically non-threatening/intimidating, were considered advantageous in terms of gaining access to participants and building trust and rapport with many of the participating farmers.

However, as Woods (2010: 7) points out, with specific reference to research in rural areas, "identities framing researcher roles include *not only* gender, age, ethnicity, education and so on, *but also* the dichotomies of insider/outsider, rural/non-rural, farmer/non-farmer".

Initially, it was anticipated that the researcher's position as a non-farming 'outsider' may have resulted in suspicion or difficulty getting participants to open up. However, this turned out not to be the case. The researcher's position as an 'outsider', i.e. not from Hatherleigh or surrounding parishes was considered to be an advantage, in that the researcher had no personal connection to the area, making pledges of confidentiality and anonymity more assured from the participant's perspective.

This was felt to facilitate more honest and open discussion than perhaps may have occurred with someone with a familial or personal connection to the area.

Similarly, the researcher's position as coming from a non-farming family also formed an important consideration prior to and during data collection. It was felt that being from a non-farming family was largely advantageous, allowing the researcher to ask questions and clarify answers in ways that someone from a farming background may have simply assumed. Likewise, as an outsider to the farming community the researcher was able to pose questions undeterred or swayed by the often powerful but tacit norms and expectations associated with intergenerational farm transfer, in a way that someone from a farm family may not have done. For example, in her work with canegrowers, Pini (2004) reflected that her own position as a canegrower's daughter meant she felt she could not probe on certain issues.

By considering researcher positionality, the researcher appreciated their role as not just an observer or recorder, but as an 'active agent' in the research process (Woods, 2010).

5.7 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data analysis software, QSR NVivo 10, was used to perform thematic analysis, understood as a process of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in qualitative data (Bryman, 2008). Interviews were all analysed in the same way, although farmer and potential successor interviews were analysed (and presented) separately, reflecting this ongoing desire to give the potential successor a voice. The recordings were initially transcribed, verbatim, into Microsoft Word, and imported into qualitative analysis software, NVivo.

Each interview transcript was read through thoroughly, and where salient words, lines, sentences or passages were identified in the context of the research objectives, they were coded to a succinct label (a 'node'), according to the topic (see Saldana, 2009). In line with Saldana's understanding, a code was understood as something that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (Saldana, 2009: 3). Examples of nodes include:

- *Lifestyle*
- *Livestock*
- *Machinery*

Where necessary, as the coding framework evolved, new nodes were created, merged and renamed.

The emergent coding framework was formulated using an inductive approach, which involved the researcher deriving meaningful themes from the data; identified themes were strongly linked to the data themselves – or 'data driven'. However, the researcher appreciates that analysis will, inevitably,

take place in the context of the researchers' prior experience, knowledge and expectations and can never truly be entirely free from this. In this sense, the research views deductive and inductive strategies as 'tendencies' rather than as uncompromising, distinct strategies (Bryman, 2008: 13).

The emergent coding framework and their populations (i.e. the number of references to that specific node) were then examined; individual nodes identified were then reviewed in the context of the specific research objectives (see Table 1.1), and where relevant grouped together, refined, combined or discarded to create a final list of broader themes. It is important to note, the coding framework was not the 'end result' for the analysis and not all nodes ended up as themes in the analysis. The framework was subject to *critical and ongoing review* with some data being removed from or added to nodes, and some nodes being merged with others, on an ad-hoc basis as the analysis naturally evolved (see Appendix 12 for a list of emergent node structure and Appendix 13 for a final list of the themes).

In this phase, themes were repeatedly refined, which sometimes involved them being split, combined, or even discarded, until a list of themes for both farmers and potential successors were finalised. Given the qualitative nature of analysis, researcher judgement was used to identify themes, in the context of the research objectives. Although the existence of the theme was not dependent on specific quantitative criteria, a strategy often deployed in thematic analysis, (i.e. had to be mentioned by 3 or more farmers), themes were decided on according to their general prevalence across the dataset *and* their relevance to the research objectives.

As well as organising transcript content, NVivo allowed socio-demographic attributes, such as age, gender, their family's time (in generations and years) on the farm, succession status and other relevant attributes, to be attributed to the participants and their narratives (attributes added can be found in Appendix 12). This allowed nodes (or more specifically text coded to each node) to be grouped according to these attributes, specifically using a series of Advanced Coding Queries and Matrix Coding Queries. Emerging patterns formed a significant part of initial data analysis, showing broad patterns in ways of thinking and attitudes according to these characteristics. Arguments and conclusions were developed using these patterns as a starting point.

The method is informed by essentialism in that it *largely assumes*, that meaning and experience are articulated through the spoken words of respondents. Use of this kind of analysis, defined by Boyatzis (1998) as semantic or manifest level analysis, reflects the desire to give the potential successor a much needed voice that is so central to this research; the ensuing analysis therefore draws on the words of the interviewees extensively, allowing interviewees to impart their own voice on the analysis, as advocated by Wilkinson (2009). However, given that family farm succession is an intricate process, laden with human emotion and encumbered by familial complexities, analysis was also, where

necessary, sensitive to and considerate of, the underlying and unspoken aspects of the phenomenon observed, that were evident in the context of the interview. Boyatzis (1998: 16) refers to this as latent level analysis, which he describes as being more interpretive.

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter has explored the methods used in this research. Having introduced and justified selection of the study area, it continued by introducing and evaluating the various sources and methods of data collection, including (an alternative) use of the NFS as a tool for the recruitment and subsequent engagement of participants, the use of key local informants and the use of semi-structured interviews with both farmers and their nominated potential successors. It continued by explicitly documenting the design of the semi-structured interview questions and structure, including how the NFS data was integrated into the questions. A discussion of the key ethical considerations and how, in particular, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were upheld was then presented. Lastly, in the interests of transparency and reproducibility, the chapter considered the methods of data analysis, namely thematic analysis, and detailed how interview data was analysed, including the process of coding and the use of coding queries in QSR NVivo 10. Leading on from this, the next chapter begins to explore and analyse the findings of the research by looking broadly at occupancy change in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, before focusing on farmers' experiences of succession and the different entry routes into farming.

Chapter Six: Born to be Farmers? Farmers' Experiences of Succession and the Importance of Succession Identification

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the qualitative findings from farmer interviews. It firstly explores the various entry paths into farming, confirming farming as a hereditary occupation, but also highlighting less widely observed experiences of entry into farming. It then examines the importance of successor identification for these farmers and also asks whether the level of importance is shaped by the farmers' own entry experiences. Next, against the backdrop of a challenging economic and environmental context, it explores the contemporary desirability of passing on the family farm, including the influence of food security agenda as an opportunity for the agricultural industry, which emerged from the data as a key factor, before explicitly exploring farmer understanding of the term.

6.0.1 A Note on Analysis Presentation

As suggested in Chapter 1, in the interests of situating research findings within the wider research context, and thus making the overall contribution to the field clear, the findings in this, and the subsequent analysis chapters, are discussed in conjunction with previous literature, *throughout*.

Although not numerical in nature, in the interest of clarity and transparency, many of the points made in the following analysis state the number of participants it refers to in brackets afterwards. Furthermore, where a typology has been developed as part of the analysis, a diagrammatic summary is presented at the end of each of the analysis chapters, demonstrating exactly which participants have been included in the grouping.

In order to contextualise these (and later) findings, a comprehensive summary of both the farmers interviewed, and their respective farms is offered in the appendix (see Appendix 14). A number of details have been generalised or altered to protect participant anonymity.

6.1 Entry into Farming

Farmers were initially grouped according to how they 'got into' farming; 'entry paths' fell into three distinct groups (see Figure 6.4 p.206 for a diagrammatic summary of these entry paths) described below, evidence for which, will be presented and discussed in turn in the ensuing sections.

1. *Established Family Farm*: is understood as a farm on which one or more familial 'successions' or handovers has occurred. This was the most common route of entry (17/26).

2. *Newly Established Family Farm*: is a farm that has *never* previously been in the family but the farmer entered farming due to, either (a) attachment to the occupation and the location (4/26), and (b) attachment to the occupation alone (3/26).
3. *New Entrants*: has no previous relationship with the occupation of farming (2/26).

6.1.1 Established Family Farms

For most of the farmers interviewed (17/26), the farm had been in their family for one or more generations and therefore many years, reaffirming the understanding of farming as one of the most hereditary of professions as previously suggested (Blanc and Perrier-Cornet, 1993; de Hann, 1994).

Father and mother [...] bought it [the farm] [...] in 1957 (Farmer 3)

My grandfather started farming here in 1911 (Farmer 5)

Grandpa bought it in 1914 (Farmer 9)

It's been in the family about, well since the 1920s (Farmer 12)

My great-Granddad bought it in 1911 (Farmer 15)

It came into my family because, my grandfather's uncle bought it in 1912 (Farmer 16)

Well, my great-grandfather came here in 1917 (Farmer 18)

My grandfather was the ... he came here in, what was it ... in the mid-1800s (Farmer 24)

More broadly, there was evidence of continuity in the research area, too. Using 1941-1943 National Farm Survey data, in combination with information from local informants and contemporary farm business directory searches, it is possible to approximate the number of farms that had remained in the same family, over the 70 years since the Survey. As denoted in Figure 6.1, 18 per cent of all original 1940s holdings remain in the same family. And of the 104 holdings that have continued to exist as the same holding, 37.5 per cent appear to have remained in the same family over the 70+ year period.

Occupancy Change in Hatherleigh and Surrounding Parishes:

How many farms have remained in the same family between the time of the Survey and now (2013)?

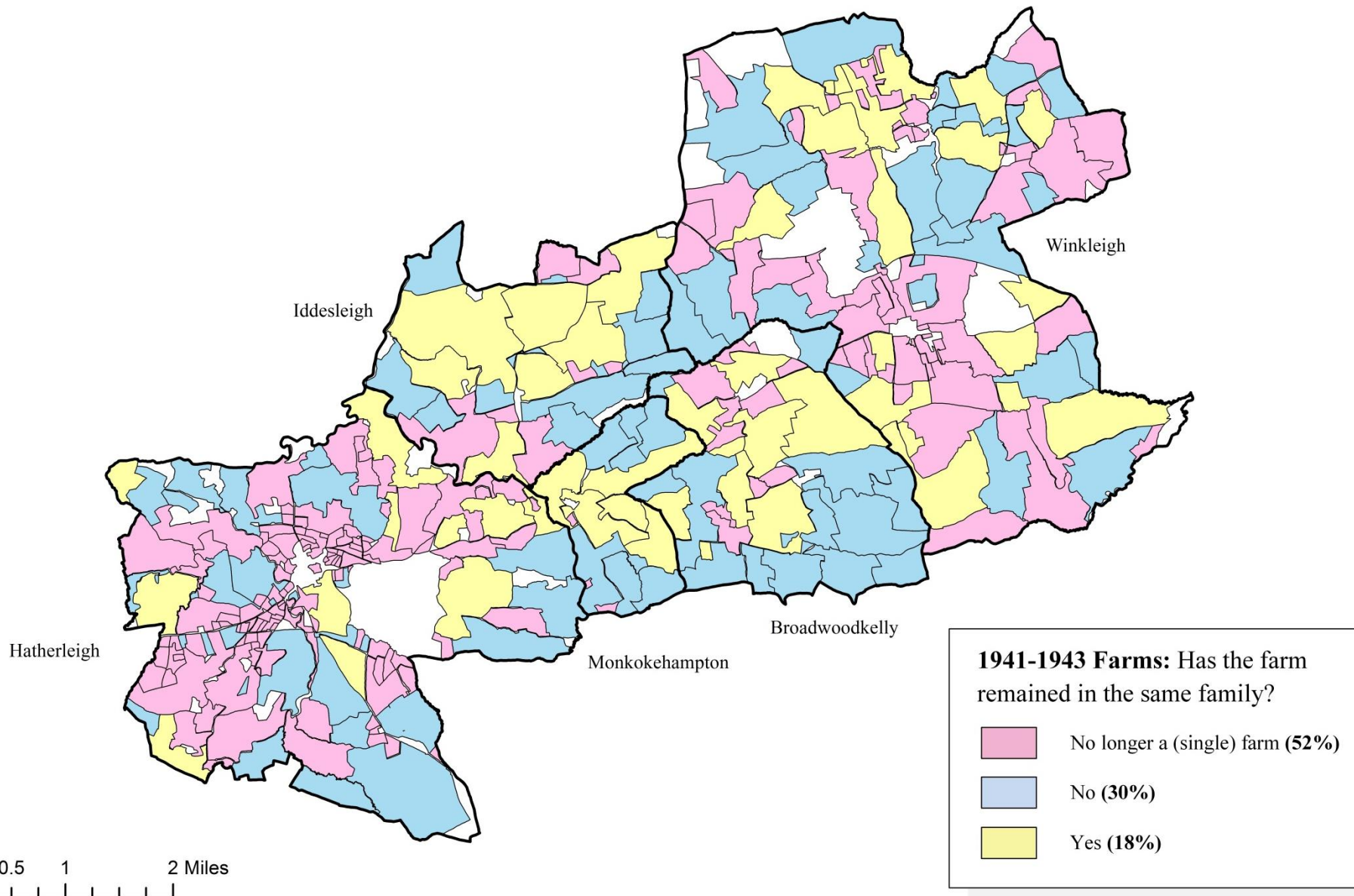


Figure 6.1 Occupancy change in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes: How many farms have remained in the same family between the time of the 1941-1943 NFS and now (2013)? (Source: Author)

Undoubtedly, a key finding of this research is the number of longstanding family farms that remain farmed in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, which continues to defy their anticipated demise and reiterates the need to consider the family farm as important agents of food production in the increasingly challenging global context.

As observed by de Hann (1994: 173), and is applicable here, “no other socioeconomic group displays such pronounced occupational heredity as farmers”, but, he continues, such continuity “cannot *only* be explained by elevated land prices and the monopoly of family farmers occupying the land”. Instead, farmer’s experiences point to a continuous wealth of subtle, yet complex, familial processes, keeping respective family lines’ going; these are explored in the following passages.

These farmers had entered farming by continuing the aforementioned longstanding family line.

Grandpa bought it in 1914 [...] then it passed to me (Farmer 9)

My grandfather [...] came to the farm in 1911, then it was my father [...] Then I was at boarding school and came back from school in 1948 um ... and came right onto the farm [...] And then I took over the running of the farm in 1970 (Farmer 5)

We’ll be third generation here, I think [...] grandfather bought the farm in the 1920s (Farmer 19)

It’s gone through four generations, my great-Granddad [...] I’m not sure what year he come here, but my great-Granddad bought it in 1911, from the estate, for a few hundred pounds I think [...] [Okay ... so 1911, that’s incredible] Yeah I think so, that was when he bought it, yeah ‘cause he was a tenant then, he was a tenant and then he bought it (Farmer 15)

My grandfather came here in the 1890s as a tenant [...] and then Lord Iddesleigh sold this farm in the early 1900s, it was the first of the farms he sold in Iddesleigh and my grandfather bought it, so that was my grandfather, and yeah we’ve benefited ever since [...] and then my grandfather passed it onto my father [...] and then my father passed it onto me (Farmer 28)

6.1.1.1 Why Did These Farmers Succeed To Their Family Farms?

As demonstrated in the above narratives, farms in this group had been passed down (at least) one or (typically) more generations. But *how* and *why* have generation after generation followed this pattern? This discussion explores the experiences and motivations of farmers who have succeeded

to *Established Family Farms* and proposes that farmers in these cases had little *choice* in succeeding to the farm.

Lack of Choice: Gender and Birth Order

In line with wider understanding of farming as a ‘masculine’ occupation (Haugen, 1990), as anticipated, all farmers from *Established Family Farms* were *exclusively* farmers’ sons (17/17), and almost exclusively the eldest son (14/17). In the small number of cases where the farm had not passed to the eldest son, it had been due to specific reasons precluding this. For example, one farmer, the middle of three sons recalls how his father’s relationship with his older brother had meant instead, he was identified as the successor.

My father never got on so well with my elder brother [...] and my Dad really wanted me to go into farming (Farmer 18)

His wife added:

Your Dad used to say to you that he always wanted you to have the farm, ‘cause he knew that you would look after it how it should be looked after (Farmer 18’s wife)

Identification of the eldest son was understood by these farmers as ‘the norm’. One farmer surmised:

I’ve never really thought of it, it’s just what happens, isn’t it? (Farmer 17)

The strength of this tradition is evident in that the suggestion of alternative successors, specifically the possibility of a sister succeeding, was openly laughed at.

[And when you took over the farm, were you the only possible successor or ...?] I got a sister, but obviously she wasn’t interested in it [laughter] so it was relatively simple that it passed to me really (Farmer 20)

In one case, a sister was not even considered as a potential successor in the context of the question.

[Were you the only possible successor, or did you have any other siblings that could have ...?] No I didn’t, no. No one, no. I had a sister, but not, no brothers, so there wasn’t really a problem there, quite simple really, it was going to pass onto me, straightforward (Farmer 4)

The dominance of impartible inheritance pattern, Wolf (1966) writes, stems from the manor-dominated areas of Europe, where Lords sought single heir inheritance in a bid to maintain economically viable rent paying units. The economic benefits of this approach were understood by

farmers interviewed as being necessary in maintaining the financial viability of the farm, although they often referred to how unfair this was.

It's just what happens really, it doesn't seem fair but you can't really divide a farm of that size up if you want to make a living out of it, so it's the only way to decide between your kids (Farmer 2)

As observed by de Hann (1994: 155) "in rural societies, it seems, people have deeply rooted ideas about the transmission of patrimonies". In one of the earliest contributions to the area Wolf (1962) (cited in de Hann, 1994), conducted fieldwork in two nearby, but contrasting villages; one German-speaking and one Italian. He noted despite the physical proximity, they assumed two different cultural worlds. Despite similar environments, means of property transmission differed greatly. Whilst the German-speaking village was marked by impartibility, land was divided equally between heirs in the Italian-speaking village. This case study, de Hann (1994: 158) later suggests, demonstrates "the primacy of culture [...] evincing loyalty to a deeply-rooted cultural heritage". Wolf's conclusions elucidate the lack of choice available to farmers in this group, in that succeeding to the family farm, as they did, simply reflects the wider cultural commitment to a 'deeply-rooted heritage'.

Many farmers simply attributed their identification as the successor to other, typically younger or female, siblings failing to be interested in the farm or pursuing other interests.

I've got 3 sisters [Okay] I think I was the only one interested in farming (Farmer 13)

I have an older sister, um, quite a bit older, who'd never been interested in the farm at all (Farmer 15)

I had a brother, I had a brother, who was 10 years younger than me, but he followed a very different career path [...] whereas I hadn't had any absolute inclination towards [his brother's vocation], he obviously did and pursued it (Farmer 5)

I got a younger brother, he wasn't terribly interested (Farmer 17)

I propose the supposed disinterest of younger or female siblings is not simply coincidence as the farmers believe it was. Although the majority of farmers, as above, attributed their identification solely to other siblings simply failing to be interested, narratives suggest an underlying process that shapes levels of interest. By simply being the (eldest) son, and thus meeting the criteria set wider cultural expectation (see Silvasti, 2003), parents began to socialise these possible successors differently; they were then subject to different expectations, pressures and as will be discussed below, experiences (particularly surrounding their involvement in farm work). This supposed 'innateness' of farming proposed here by the farmers of *Established Family Farms* interviewed, i.e.

‘the son always enjoyed it more than daughter’ or ‘the eldest son always enjoyed it more than the youngest son’ because ‘it’s in his genes’, was also observed amongst those interviewed by Fischer and Burton (2014) and similarly rejected. They state instead, and as is applicable here, the interest of the son in their case study, was rooted in the fact “the son was initially identified as the successor *simply* because he was a boy” – a product of “the wider reality that maleness remains at the core of farmer ideal-types” (Fischer and Burton, 2014: 10, emphasis added).

However, although Farmer 16 *is* the eldest son, and his younger brother is now farming elsewhere (as you would anticipate in light of the above discussion), Farmer 16 insisted that his continuation on the home farm, was not related to their respective ages. In fact, he recalled devising a particularly novel way of deciding who farmed the home farm, which opposes the above suggestions. His recollection of how he divided the farm is included here (and quoted in its entirety) as a reminder of the diversity present even amongst a small cohort of farmers, and to demonstrate that not every farm would have followed a ‘typical path’.

[Okay, yeah ... and were you the eldest out of you and your brother?] Yes, yes I am [And do you think that played a part in it being you that stayed here, and him moving to another farm?] No [Okay] What happened was [...] we ran along the business for around 5 or 6 years and then we had to decide what to do, because I had children and my brother was gonna get married and that’s always the tricky thing, is deciding what to do for the best ... we got on quite well but we both wanna be the boss really [Yes] [...] so we had to decide what to do [...] so when I went to Australia for a year after college, and when we were camping, we were always hungry, one person would cook the food and the other person would dish it up [Yep] So you’d have two plates and you’d dish it up [Okay] So the other person would choose which plate they wanted, so basically he’d pick the biggest plate, and it was up to the person who’d dished it up, to make it as equal as possible ... so we were going around in circles with deciding how, what to do with this farm [Yeah] And my mother and brother wanted to split this farm and maybe build a bungalow, but the trouble with that is, the farms end up getting smaller and smaller and smaller and less viable and we would be competing for rented land nearby and really we would just be too close [Yeah] So what I dreamt up, like I just said about dishing up the food ... we’d buy another farm, and um, and um, the cows ... we’d buy a dairy farm, and we would, we had a budget of about £350,000 which was what we thought we could afford and we would take, sort of that farm, plus all the cows and all the quota, which back then was quite valuable, and everything else would be split fifty-fifty, all the live and dead stock because the assumption was that this farm ... well, this farm, we both love this farm, you know ... So that’s what I dreamt up [That kind of idea, yeah] Whoever went, could pick a farm, take all the

cows, all the quota, and we'd split everything fifty-fifty, so my brother, then he could choose, whether he wanted to stay here without the cows, or go somewhere else so I went off looking at farms down in Cornwall actually and I was, I assumed I'd be the one who'd be going [...] I decided what was appropriate and how we were gonna go about things, but it was up to him to choose ... and now we get on very well, 'cause uh, there's no bitterness about what happened (Farmer 16)

Lack of Choice: Socialisation

As suggested above, the typical disinterest of younger or female siblings and the evident interest of farmers was not a coincidence, but is actually the result of the socialisation of farmers as children. Here the definition of the 'possible successor' (as offered in Chapter 4) is relevant; the possible successor, as identified or distinguished as such by the incumbent, begins on a specific path to become the farmer, during which the boundaries set for them are limited. As Silvasti (2012: 16) recognises, and as is demonstrated below, "the boundaries set on the children in the farm family during the socialisation differ". This differential treatment is the product of the 'ideal of continuity' – the set of ideas and beliefs in place that ensure and facilitate the transfer of a secure and sound farm business to the next generation, widely understood as the "prime objective" of the family farm (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 94) and the "most important script"¹³ in farmers' way of life".

Central to the socialisation of these farmers, was their (sometimes quite extensive) involvement in the farm from an early age.

Been working here for as long as I can remember ... my first memory is out in that field there (Farmer 11)

I was milking a cow when I was 7 [...] You haven't got a chance to learn anything else really ... you were out on the farm as soon as ... as soon as you know, you learnt how to walk [laughs] (Farmer 9)

Interestingly and linked to this, is that farmers in this group were sometimes completely, if not initially, unable to articulate specific motivations, nor time or period of their lives, during which they decided to enter farming. When asked what initially motivated him to farm, one farmer replied:

That is a big question [long pause] I'm not sure really (Farmer 5)

Similarly, other farmers initially answered:

¹³ 'Scripts' are defined as a type of mental map that are used to organise behaviour along socially appropriate lines (see Silvasti, 2003)

Difficult to say really (Farmer 3)

I don't know really ... hard to say (Farmer 11)

You can't put your finger on it (Farmer 17)

Farming life wasn't a bad thing to do ... um, I can't say much more than that (Farmer 28)

This difficulty is indicative of their early socialisation into the role. Their identity as farmers became imperceptibly engrained in who they are from such an early age, they never *had* to decide about what they wanted to pursue as a career, their entry was simply by default or as Sachs (1973: 202) explicates, the potential successor “grows to his professional role so that he has almost no option but to internalise this role, i.e. to accept it as an element of his own self”. Silvasti (2012) also observed farmers' inability to explain their interest in farming amongst those she interviewed, which she also attributes to their upbringing as active and indispensable members of the farm as a productive unit.

This early participation profoundly influences farm children's identities, as they begin to internalise a farmer identity from a young age. In the non-farming community, vocational identity is constructed during secondary socialization, typically upon entry to the workplace. In contrast, farm children establish their vocational identity in their early years, *parallel* to primary socialisation, which by its very nature is emotionally charged and reliant on an emotional bond between the child and his or her significant others (Silvasti, 2012). Identity construction during this early and emotionally charged period becomes entwined with the emotions and relationships associated with primary socialisation. Vocational or farmer identity constructed parallel to primary socialisation, means it becomes “so much more firmly entrenched in consciousness than worlds internalized in secondary socialisations” (Berger and Luckman, 1966: 134) alone, and is offered here as an explanation of both the difficulty farmers experienced in articulating their motivations, and reinforces the lack of choice available to the potential successor, given the embeddedness of their identities as farmers. To have strayed from the predefined path would have meant giving up an integral part of one's identity.

Never really thought about it though ... just always been around it, never known any different (Farmer 4)

Arnett's (1995) theory of broad and narrow socialisation is particularly useful here. Arnett defines seven sources of socialisation, including family, peers, school/work, community, the media, the legal system and the cultural belief system. Broad socialisation, he suggests, draws on *all* of these sources, encouraging ‘individualism, independence and self-expression’ and “is broad in the sense

that a relatively broad range of individual differences in paths of development can be predicted". In contrast, narrow socialisation, drawing on a much narrower range of sources, promotes obedience and conformity and is likely to be characterised by a limited range of variation in behaviours because "individuals are pressed toward conformity to a certain cultural standard" (Arnett, 1995: 618). Arnett's dichotomisation, although specifically concerned with explaining variation in socialisation practices across different cultures, lends itself particularly well to explaining the 'creation' of farmers. Farmer 17 recognised the different treatment of him and his younger brother; the idea that their father let his younger brother 'off' to do 'other things', leaving him on the farm to help out, explicates this idea of broad and narrow socialisation.

So Dad let him go off and do other things ... This and that ... yeah, it was kind of half expected and I wanted to really [And you being the oldest, do you think that had anything to do with who took over the farm?] There was probably more of an expectation on me ... probably was, yeah [What makes you say that? You know, how did that kind of manifest, or like why do you feel there was that kind of expectation?] I think, I was maybe more encouraged, like to be out and about on the farm ... be out there with the livestock and that when I was a kid (Farmer 17)

Socialisation ultimately means the establishment of limits, and for those identified as the potential successor, such limits are more restricted and limited, drawing on a narrower range of Arnett's sources, with high levels of conformity in that they all became farmers. The socialisation of farmers interviewed appeared to be relatively narrow, with several farmers commenting on their lack of opportunity to be involved in *anything but* farming.

Never been anywhere and we'd never done 'this and that' [...] there was always something to do on the farm, so you stayed and you got on with it (Farmer 5)

Farmers frequently referred to the contrasting experiences of their non-eligible siblings.

When the opportunity came for [Farmer's brother] to buy a small holding, my father was keen for him to crack on with that and supported him to do so (Farmer 18)

I got a younger brother, he wasn't terribly interested so Dad *let* him go off and do other things ... This and that (Farmer 17)

These references to the experiences of their non-succeeding siblings highlight the *active* role of the parents in shaping the socialisation process, although, it is important to consider however, as Arnett (1995: 619) points out, "parents do not simply create their parenting practices *de novo*; rather they are likely to follow to some extent the role requirements for parents [...] which they have learned as a result of their own experiences of socialisation".

Narrow boundaries and the truly few sources of socialisation, were evident throughout farmers' narratives. Contact with peers was, in several incidences limited to other farming children.

Farming was all I was ever interested in ... if I weren't farming, I was at school talking about farming to my mates ... they were the same ... just farming, farming, farming ... we didn't know any different ... best days work, getting outta school for me (Farmer 25)

One farmer recalled how 'farm kids' were not interested at school; already consumed by their 'farmer identity'.

When we [local farm children] went to school, all we talked about was farming, and you got in trouble for it usually [laughter] ... We got in more trouble for talking about farming, rather than listening to what the teacher was saying ... we weren't exactly naughty but it was just what we wanted to talk about, not interested in anything else ... and she'd say 'Dave, you're talking again' ... [Yeah] ... it was just, it was just all we knew (Farmer 21)

Whilst a number of these farmers interviewed were attuned to this differential treatment, as a group, farmers who entered via *Established Family Farms*, quite surprisingly, did not report any explicit pressure to succeed to the farm, and in some cases when they were asked about whether they had experienced any pressure, they fervently insisted they did not.

I wasn't pressurised, there was *certainly no pressure* (Farmer 12)

It wasn't *really* forced upon me or anything, no, nothing like that, I always wanted to do it, I had wanted to do it for as long as I can remember (Farmer 4)

[Okay and did you ever feel any pressure to kind of continue the family business ... or ...?] Well, no, not at all, I don't suppose (Farmer 19)

Relatively narrow socialisation, particularly in comparison to non-eligible farm children, combined with early, and often significant, involvement in farm work demonstrates how these farmers had been brought up to not know any different. As a result, although none of the farmers in this group experienced explicit pressure, they frequently expressed a lack of opportunity to do anything else, which in turn, meant they *had* to continue in farming.

I don't think there was any real pressure, but, um it wasn't like I was ever going to do anything else ... I didn't know anything else ... not really (Farmer 20)

When I left school, whether I did feel that I was expected to carry it on, I don't know, possibly, I don't know, but I wasn't aware of it, well nothing was ever said ... but I'd not really known any different, didn't have the opportunity to know any different, never done anything else, so I kind of had to, in that sense (Farmer 13)

I propose the success of these established farms in maintaining the family line over time is attributable to the lack of explicit pressure experienced by farmers interviewed. Gradually and subtly socialising (establishing limits), is inherently self-sustaining, because, as demonstrated in farmers' narratives, they did not feel they were the 'victim' of parental pressure. Instead they are led to believe they have chosen to enter farming themselves, when in reality, they have, through the establishment of limits, had little choice other than to enter farming.

A notable number of farmers in this group also explained their entry into farming as a result of it being an 'easy option', in that farming was always available to them as a career and required little effort to enter.

Easiest option was, easiest option was to stay home on the farm, in a way (Farmer 24)

It's just something that I've always wanted to do, and it was always an option for me (Farmer 20)

After their initial difficulty, a surprising minority of farmers in this group stated a range of more intrinsic motivations. Enjoyment of the lifestyle and the sense of freedom it afforded and enjoyment of working with animals were most frequently cited.

It's more than a job [...] it's a lifestyle (Farmer 13)

It's a lifestyle. Not just a job (Farmer 17)

He continued:

Being your own boss, doing what you want to do, when you want to do it [and] you know, it's always there, 365 days of the year, but if you want to nip somewhere in the middle of the day, there's no one telling you, you can't ... I suppose it's slightly different if you're milking, when you are really tied, but this being beef and crops, you can go, not that we go very far, but you can be a bit more flexible ... (Farmer 17)

We just love the freedom (Farmer 11)

It was nice to come back and have a nice bit of real freedom (Farmer 5)

I love to see the new born animals and I love looking at all the stock, they are marvellous to look after and take care of ... and I take a great pride in watching the animals growing up, that have come to be the type of animals you want to sell on ... (Farmer 17)

I enjoy working with cows (Farmer 25)

Interestingly, however, in one case, even reference to their enjoyment of working with animals was expressed as a product of their upbringing.

Being brought up with cows and all the rest of it, you just love it 'cause it's all you've known, your family and that [Yeah I can imagine] I was milking a cow when I was 7 [Wow ... okay, it was just something you grew up with I suppose?] Yes, something I grew up with, I didn't know any different (Farmer 9)

This suggests, as recognised by Gasson (1973) in her discussion of farmers' goals and values, that *even* enjoyment of activities, tasks and lifestyle, or what Gasson terms intrinsic values, are the product of farmer upbringing.

"Values are cultural products, held by all members of a social system [...] They are not inborn, but learned, mainly in childhood, through social interaction with parents, teachers, peers" (Gasson, 1973: 525).

Lack of Choice: Next Link in the Chain

Having identified themselves as the 'potential successor' from a young age, farmers in this group began to construct their identity in accordance to their family's 'story'. As evident in Section 6.1.1, many farmers (e.g. Farmers 9, 5, 15, 19 and 28) from *Established Family Farms*, naturally, in that they were not prompted to, situated their own entry into farming in the farm's historical context, drawing on their family's 'story' and in every case referring to their forebears. Their inclination to situate their entry in this context further reflects their lack of choice; having been socialised into identifying themselves as the potential successor, these farmers began to construct their identity around their position as the next link in the (sometimes very long) chain.

This lack of choice was evident in the way farmers in this group frequently described their entry into farming as 'simple', with *very limited* elaboration. One farmer's response summarises this point particularly well.

My father and gramp were here and [Yep] 'Bob's your uncle' [Yep] Simple as that, yep (Farmer 9)

The idea of simplicity was common throughout responses to this question and reiterates how succeeding to the family farm involved subconsciously following a predefined path set out for them; it was simple in that they did not deviate from the path, and thus they had little to say about it.

[How have you come to be the farmer here then? You know, in terms of how has it been passed down through the generations to you?] My father bought it from my grandfather, because he was, um, he married my grandfather's daughter ... so, he had to buy the farm because my grandfather hadn't had any money to retire on, so he bought it ... he bought the farm off of my Granddad [Okay] So he bought the farm in 1942 and I carried on when I left school ... and that's about it really (Farmer 4)

The recurring nature of inheritance and family farming has clearly wielded a powerful influence on farmers in this group, with successive generational handovers having provided a context within which to operate. As Busch (1989: 8) states, "we are all born into a world that was here before we arrived and will be here after we die [...] in short, we are always born into a tradition [...] these traditions are sources of values for us". In light of the successions that have gone before them, farmers in this group felt they had little choice other than to follow suit.

Bauman's (1996) concept of communitarian 'freedom of choice' is particularly useful here. He believes "the good choice is the choice of what is already given – the discovery and giving a conscious expression to 'historical identity' transmitted through birth" (Bauman, 1996: 81). This simply suggests that freedom is merely used to choose non-freedom; "voluntarity means here using individual volition to abstain from exercising free will" (Bauman, 1996: 81). It is Bauman's (1996: 81) belief that "true choice has been made and signed before the individual's birth" that is particularly pertinent for farmers in this group, in that "the life that follows the birth is all about finding out what that choice was, and behaving accordingly." In line with Bauman's theory, farmers in this group only exercised freedom by choosing to comply and follow the predefined path, carved out for them by what, or perhaps more relevantly who, has gone before them.

A further motivation for farmers in this group was often expressed as the *need* to continue out of respect for the hard work of previous generations, and provides further support for the belief that farmers in this group had very little option but to continue the family line. These farmers perceive themselves as custodians of the farm, rather than autonomous businessmen, compelled to take on the farm to ensure previous generations' hard work did not become wasted.

Looking at this here, my parents, my Mum used to work a lot on the farm, they used to work hard, and I remember my Grandparents farming, I remember my grandfather, he

was a particularly hardworking man, and I just feel that you know ... what they, what they did for us, back through the years (Farmer 21)

It's in the genes in a way, wasn't it? It's quite interesting really, you know, you feed calves, Friesian breeds are much easier to get onto a bucket feeding, rather than the single suckler breeds, which are not used to being fed on a bucket of milk and I think just two or three generations it tends to get into the genes, I don't think we understand everything [Okay] But the generations before me have made those changes [To the cows?] Yeah, and all that hard work, you know, you want to continue that, build on it (Farmer 19)

Farmers' propensity to refer to the hard work of previous generations, and accompanying claims such as 'you don't want be the one who loses it', denotes an intense sense of duty to the generations farming before them. During her work with farmers in Powys, Mid Wales, Price (2010: 88) recognised what she described as a "deep attachment to the family story they feel *bound* to continue", which 'traps' successive generations into feeling obliged to continue. In her work with East Anglian farmers, Gasson (1973: 531) similarly observed how "in many cases *no conscious career choice* appears to have been made" but suggests "values have been formed in response to the individual's environment, the son growing up in the *expectation* that he will follow in his father's footsteps" (emphasis added).

For many in this group, motivations were not just concerned with the past, but remarkably were set in a much broader temporal framework, which extended into the future, beyond the life of those interviewed, and considered not-yet-existent future generations.

Farmer 17 suggested:

You don't want to see it go anywhere else really, you want to keep it in your family (Farmer 17)

He continued:

It's like a family heirloom, you know? It's been passed down, and kept in your family and looked after and that, I didn't want to be the one who loses it, or has to sell it or whatever (Farmer 17)

One farmer's answer substantiates this point particularly well.

You asked me why I enjoy farming, why I went into farming ... I like the continuity [Yeah] Being part of something bigger than the 70, 80 years you're on this planet (Farmer 16)

Farmers in this group seldom referred exclusively to intrinsic motivations, such as enjoyment of working with livestock, or a preference for working outdoors and clearly were driven by their position in the 'bigger picture'. Similarly, Gill (2013: 85), whose research involved longstanding family farms in New South Wales, Australia, observed "these farmers have become farmers because of the actions of their ancestors [...] they therefore have a responsibility to live up to this legacy and pass it on to their successors".

For many farmers in this group, their central concern was to fulfil their role in this temporal framework. As Gill (2013: 85) aptly continues, the present is merely "contingent and temporary, and individuals are not important except as placeholders in the passage of time".

When I think what we're sitting on here, million and a half I suppose, maybe more [Yep] I could sell up, and never have to do another day's work again, go and live where I want to, I could go anywhere in the world [...] That would finish it for the next generation wouldn't it. Who was *I* to give the farm up? [laughs] do you know what I mean? [Yeah] I just don't feel it's mine to do that with, I just think I didn't buy it, I've had the fortune to increase it, with sort of ... nearly doubled it in my farming life time, I suppose [So you're kind of taking care of it?] Yeah taking care of it for the next generation (Farmer 21)

To keep the flag flying, you know, I wouldn't have wanted it any other way, you know? There wasn't another option (Farmer 9)

The way Farmer 21, a fourth generation farmer, selflessly asked "Who was *I* to give the farm up?" emphasises the insignificance of the individual in this group; the way he stressed 'I', reflects his understanding of his own position as simply the next link in the chain, but more poignantly depicts the lack of choice, he, and other farmers in this group, had to enter farming. Farmers in this group were essentially components in the cyclical system of farm inheritance, primarily motivated by a sense of duty or responsibility towards both the past and the future, and reflects, how agriculture, more than any other sector, "has been characterised by tradition and 'family farm thinking' where the collective has precedence over the individual" (Villa, 1999: 328).

Lack of Choice: Attachment to Land or Area?

In line with the heritage associated with, and often referred to, by farmers who entered these established farms, a small but notable cohort of farmers appeared motivated by an emotional attachment to the farm and its land. Despite the difficulty of the land on the Culm (see Section 5.2.5 (ii)) and frequent reference to the difficulty of the land, e.g. "the farm itself is very restrictive" and "it's not the best land", farmers referred to their 'attachment' to the land as a motivation for continuation.

The farm, it's part of you and you know I went away and uh, I always loved coming back home, so yeah ... I saw all sorts of things around the world ... but if I could've been anywhere in the world, I wanted to be here, come back to this farm ... it's strong, really strong ... very powerful (Farmer 16)

It's nice, nice [laughs] I know that sounds silly but it is, it's nice working on land that has been passed through and that you've grown up on, I think that's quite significant for many farmers too (Farmer 12)

The attachment to the land felt by these farmers had superseded the difficulty of the land; a testament to the strength of attachment. Such powerful attachment to the land is the product of long-term residence, which metaphorically in the case of these farmers, extends beyond the life of the individual farmer, to incorporate previous generations' time on the land, *combined with* an experience of, and extensive involvement with the land. For Tuan (1989), it is the combination of these factors that is key in affording this deeper connection; what he terms 'rootedness', a state of comfort or stability, is simply the product of long-term residence in a specific locale, whereas attachment is only achieved by active involvement in a place. Farmers in this group assume a unique position characterised by extensive physical and social involvement in the area.

Just as the inheritance of 'keepsakes' (such as jewellery and ornaments) in non-farming households are understood by Finch and Mason (2000: 142) to "act as the embodiment of a person who no longer has a physical body", the farm, its land and buildings, are a physical manifestation and lasting connection to family members that have since passed away. As evident in the following excerpt, this connection appeared to make the farm 'hard to pull away from'.

You look around and think 'my grandfather built that', and such like, and yeah I suppose that would have been hard to pull away from to a certain extent (Farmer 28)

Incidentally, in a separate section of the interview, one farmer recalled how his late father constructed a piggery. The way he fondly recalled his father building the unit is of particular interest in this context; as although not explicitly given as a motivation for his continuation on the family farm, it demonstrates the apparentness of the connection between a part of the farm and a deceased family member.

My father, he built some ... I do pigs, I've got a pig unit, he built a piggery in 1961, the year I was born, um, that's still the best unit, it's insulated, double glazed, it's under-floor ... I tell you, it's just the business, and my pigs seem to do well, and so Dad ... he also cared about what he did, and what he did, he did for not just him, but for everyone after him (Farmer 16)

As demonstrated the farm acts as a focus for memory, a focus which according to Finch and Mason (2000) enables the deceased individual(s) to continue to be part of the farmer's 'stock of memories'. Although none of the farmers in this group explicitly referred to this connection enabling them to 'remember' or 'feel close' to previous generations, at most, they simply commented on how they felt 'unable' to leave the farm (see above), I postulate the connection provided by the farm, its land and buildings, constitutes an intuitive and yet strong wrench on these farmers, that is hard to pull away from.

Gray's concept of *consubstantiality* is particularly useful in explaining the specific attachment expressed by farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding areas. Defined as when "two phenomena [such as beings and a place], seemingly distinct in time, space, and/or nature, partake of the same substance and are therefore fundamentally different refractions of one phenomena" (Gray, 2000: 216), consubstantiality denotes how farmers and their families become united with their farm, a product of what Gray describes as the 'everyday referential practice' of the family on the farm. Gray demonstrates the consubstantial relationship by drawing on his ethnographic material from his fieldwork in Teviothead, a hill sheep farming locality in the Borders region of Scotland, by noting "the interchangeability of family name and farm name [...] in everyday conversation among people in Teviothead"; in other words, the farm and the family are as one. By recognising the merging of the farmer, his/her family and the farm, it becomes possible to comprehend the attachment to their family farm reported by farmers, given they are, according to Gray's concept, as one, or what he describes as being 'united in common substance'.

The intensity of attachment to land for farmers in this group contradicts Williams' (1963) earlier observation that, in comparison to Irish family farmers, who believed '*when you're born to a spot, you're married to it*', "in England and Wales, there is *no such attachment to the family land*" (emphasis added). In his study of a West Country village, Ashworthy (a pseudonym), he described farmers as having "certain sentimental associations" to the farmhouse and more generally the farm, he ultimately concluded how farm land was merely "a means to an end, to be sold or transformed according to circumstances" (Williams, 1963: 80). However, it is important to consider the context of Williams' work and the reasons why this seems no longer to be the case in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Researching a period (1900-1960) in which, although declining, the percentage of land rented consistently exceeded the percentage owned (Newby *et al*, 1978), farmers and their families were notably mobile and thus accustomed to moving around for economic advancement. Moreover, Williams (1963: 31) describes:

"During this century [20th century] Ashworthy has been characterized by a constantly changing pattern of land-holding. During the last thirty years, severe economic depression, followed by war and the return of prosperity have in turn stimulated

change. With very few exceptions, the farmers of the parish are accustomed to this dynamic situation. To them a farm is not so much a particular tract of land or group of fields which is more or less permanently associated with a farmstead, but something which can be altered in shape and disposition to suit their circumstances.”

Farmers in Ashworthy and other parishes during this time would have, as Williams describes, had to become accustomed to this dynamism, and not allowing themselves to become attached to the land which they could easily be moving on from should a bigger or better farm become available. However, as the percentage of owner-occupation has increased, accounting for 70 per cent of farmed land in the UK in 2010 (House of Commons, 2010) and given that *all* farmers in this group were owner-occupiers – with a mean number of years of familial association exceeding 90 years – Williams’ thesis is now largely redundant. Instead, the occupational longevity and stability of the families in this group, has fostered the development of farm-specific attachment.

Alongside attachment to the land, 2 of the farmers in this group reported attachment to the more general area, related to the farm families’ historical association with other nearby farms. Rather than being a case of being attached to a specific tract of land *or* being attached, more generally, to the broader area i.e. the parish or group of parishes, based on their narratives, I would suggest that *both* types of connection are ‘at play’ and are mutually reinforcing; it is not a case of being attached to one or the other (which Williams (1963) suggests), but as Farmer 16’s narrative demonstrates, it can involve a combination different geographic levels of attachment. In this case, the historical attachment to the area acts as a base, intensifying the attachment to the holding.

[Were you, were you keen for one of you, you know, given the connection to this kind of property and this farm, that someone in your family was maybe still here or ... or was that maybe not a factor?] It was certainly a factor for me [Okay] In my heart, I wanted to stay here, I wanted to be here [Why did you want to stay on the land, has the fact that your family have been farming here a long time, um, how, can you put that into words, how would you explain it to someone like me?] It’s because although we’ve only been here a hundred years, we’ve been the neighbouring farm a long way back (Farmer 16)

Similarly, Farmer 18 recalled how his grandfather had been renting a farm in a nearby parish, prior to their arrival at the current family farm:

[Okay and do you know how long it had been in the family?] My great-grandfather came here in 1917 ... my father was 8 when they moved here [That’s a long time] Yes [Had he previously been farming, your great-grandfather?] He was renting a property and a farm at Winkleigh and he bought this, he came here and bought this farm here

... but he did come from a farming background ... grandfather was a farmer's son [So going back even further than that, farming's been part of your family for a very long time then? And round here too?] Generations and generations and generations ... and yeah, it's all been around this area which is nice (Farmer 18)

These (even more) longstanding connections to the general area, attributable to their family's historical occupation of other farms in the vicinity, reflect the changes in occupation characteristic of Devon in the 1900-1960 period. As Williams (1963) observed in his Devonshire parish of Ashworthy (a pseudonym) and as was the case elsewhere in Devon (Williams, 1963), the period between 1900 and 1960 was characterised by 'considerable movement' of farmers from farm to farm *within* parishes, but also in between other nearby parishes (see Figure 6.2 for the example of movement). This movement means that in addition to the familial connection to the *current farm* (which may in itself be substantial in terms of years), these farmers and their families had a further connection to other farms in the area.

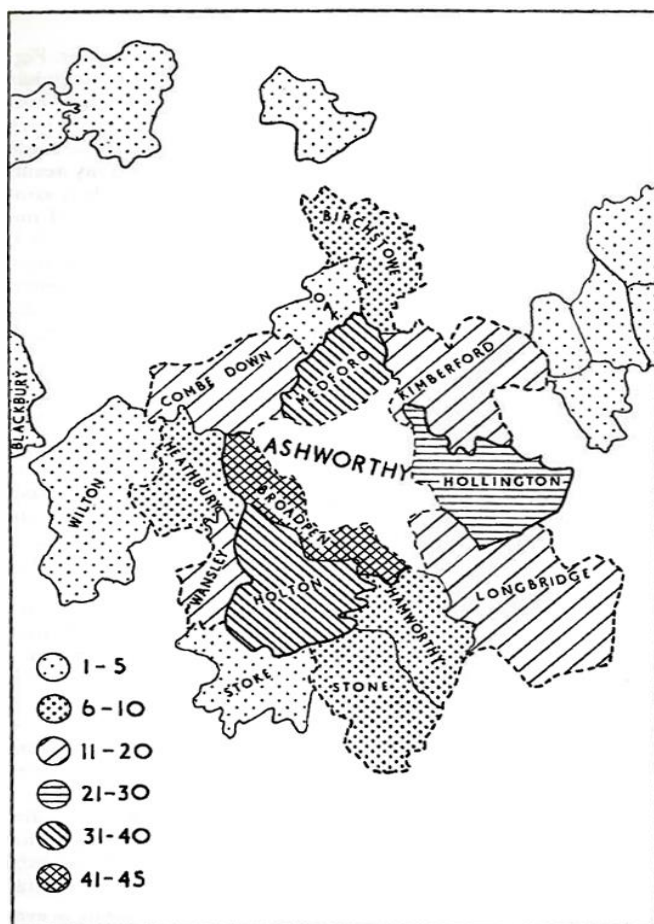


Figure 6.2 Gross movement of farm occupiers to and from 'Ashworthy' 1900-1960 (Source: Williams, 1963)

Although research in the succession field has recurrently attributed, in part, the ability of the farm family to reproduce itself to *farm specific* attachment, and whilst the findings from Hatherleigh and

surrounding parishes support this, they also reveal how attachment is not *always* confined to a specific farm, and can, reflecting the historical mobility of farm families in the area (as documented by Williams, 1963), extend beyond the individual farm and to the local area more generally. This supports Williams *et al* (1992: 32) suggestion that “attachment to a place may be evident at a number of geographic levels, including site specific, area specific, or physiography specific”.

More generally, farmers reported a more general desire to be part of the local community.

It’s nice to be part of a community and I feel that if you do go away, or work somewhere else, you lose that community feeling, don’t you? [Yeah] I think the Church and the local village community, the whole area, that *all* sort of draws you in really (Farmer 19)

It’s nice isn’t it, being part of something, it’s a nice area to be part of (Farmer 20)

Farming life wasn’t a bad thing to do ... um, I can’t say much more than that [...] it goes beyond the farm itself, it’s being part of the community, the people that kind of thing (Farmer 28)

Enabled me to sort of live and work within the community (Farmer 5)

In this sense, the area provides a “means of creating and maintaining one’s self” and “may be viewed as an essential part of one’s self, resulting in a strong emotional attachment to places” (Williams *et al*, 1992: 32).

6.1.2 New Farmers

Although entry via succession to an already, and typically, long-established, family farm was common, a significant number (7) of those interviewed had grown up on a family farm and later established themselves on a different farm. In these cases, the farms were exclusively purchased for or by the younger, non-succeeding farmers’ children, whilst their older brothers continued on the home farm.

[Okay, that’s great ... why was the farm bought then ... was it to incorporate into one big farm or ...?] Well, it was more because there was me and me brother, and he was the eldest so he was going to stay on the home farm, and it gave me the opportunity to farm too, so I think it was more with that in mind really [Okay, so more for you to have separate farms then?] Yeah (Farmer 2)

Although less conventional, the ensuing sections will demonstrate, said cases are *just* as much a product (although perhaps an inadvertent one) of the farm family’s foremost desire to pass on the

farm business to the next generation or what Silvasti (2012) terms the ‘ideal of continuity’.

These farmers all recognised their acquisition of ‘another’ farm was an indirect consequence of the tradition.

[And your brother’s farming at the home farm now?] Yeah, yeah he is ... yeah [Okay ... and how did it kind of ... how did it transpire that you came here and he ...] He was a couple of years older, so yeah, that’s just what happened (Farmer 6)

Yeah, for my sins, it’s all I’ve ever done, from, we started elsewhere, my father had a small family farm, but unfortunately I was a bit far down the pecking order being one of four [laughs]. So I left and ended up renting (Farmer 23)

Although all farmers in this group were farming away from the family farm, farmers in this group broadly divided into two further distinct groups.

6.1.2.1 Newly Established Family Farms: Extension Family Farms

The most significant observation is that several of these respondents (4) had entered farming through purchasing a farm in the immediate *vicinity* of the long established home farm.

[So, was the 1940s owner related to you?] No, no, not at all [That’s fine, so how did you come to be farming here, how did that transpire?] [...] We lived at the home farm, which is quarter mile up the road really, and most of the land adjoins, um and that’s the family farm and I suspect the 1970s, maybe 1977 or 1978 that we had the opportunity to buy this farm [Okay, that’s great ... why was the farm bought then ... was it to incorporate into one big farm or ...?] Well, it was more because there was me and me brother, and he was the eldest so he was going to stay on the home farm, and it gave me the opportunity to farm too, so I think it was more with that in mind really [Okay, so more for you to have separate farms then?] Yeah (Farmer 2)

[So in the 1940s, from what I can tell the farm was owned by a Mr Smith ... um actually no, sorry he was a tenant here in the 1940s ... would that be right?] I’m not sure [...] [That’s fine] What was the name you said? [I’ve got a Mr A Smith] Smith? [Yeah] Yeah, yeah well he was before the Jones’ [Okay, so can you tell me a little bit about how, well obviously in the 1940s, it was, the farm here wasn’t in the family ... how was it, you’ve come to be the farmer here?] We own the farm down the road [...] it was then owned by my parents, and then my brother and I split it in half, and then this farm came for sale, and then I bought that (Farmer 14)

I grew up on our farm just literally ‘round the corner ... couple a mile from here [Okay and how come you left the home farm?] Well it was quite a small farm, certainly not big enough for me and my brother [Yeah, I see ... so did you um, sorry, did your brother stay on the home farm then?] Yeah, yeah he did. We farmed together for a bit, but this became available and I jumped at the chance really. [Of course ... um, and why did you leave, as opposed to your brother I mean?] He was the oldest, simple as that my love ... farm wasn’t big enough for the both of us, so me coming here was the next best thing (Farmer 26)

I moved here going on nearly twenty years now ... yeah it must be, was farming back home, over the back here, next farm along, with my father and brother [Okay and how did you end up here?] Well, me and my brother, we farmed together a few years after Dad retired, but Dad’s pension was propping us up, so to speak ... we knew one of us would end up having to leave after me Dad died, but then this farm became available ... shame really, felt terrible for them they got in debt and all sorts ...terrible ... so yeah, we came here, my wife and I, in the early 90s ... 93 I think, yeah. [Okay and why was it you then? Why did your brother stay at the home farm?] He was older [Okay, simple as that then?] Yeah, yeah (Farmer 6)

Furthermore, these farms continue, in some capacity, to be run alongside the ‘home farm’. Given their physical proximity and interconnectedness they are best understood as ‘extensions’ of the original family farm. One farmer on his ‘new farm’ and his brother on the ‘home farm’, run an education scheme for children collectively, across the two farms.

A closer look at the language used by these farmers reveals the actuality of the relationship between these farms.

We work closely together [How so?] Cows on one, feed grown on the other ... broadly speaking ... works well (Farmer 26)

It came available and it was only, not one, but next away ... so it was convenient to work with the two, *we* work them together (Farmer 14)

One farmer even commented how he felt, that combining work across both the farm, was akin to him remaining on the home farm.

We work them as one farm basically ... dairy herd on one, food on the other ... so it’s not really any different, me being here (Farmer 14)

This organisational structure is similar to the *horizontal multifamily farm*, observed by Moreno-Pérez *et al* (2011: 503); defined as “two or more households linked by a collateral relationship (i.e.

siblings)”. However, Moreno-Pérez *et al* (2011: 501) note “multifamily organisation forms is not receiving as much consideration by the academy as other major trends in family farms”. The proliferation of this multifamily organisational structure evident in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes is a key finding of this research; denoting the far reaching influence of the ideal of continuity associated with family farming that has previously been overlooked.

Although farmers in this group did not appear to experience a sense of duty to continue the family line *on* the family farm, they did experience an intense attachment to both the locality and the occupation of farming akin in intensity to the attachment experienced by many of the farmers who succeeded to their family’s longstanding home farm.

Although for Farmer 2, the overriding factor in his decision to farm was the desire “to be out in the open, and not in an office”, he also noted how:

It was quite nice to stay around the area, stay part of the community and that (Farmer 2)

In some cases, attachment to the area and occupation were intertwined.

It’s all we’ve ever done as a family really ... what we’re known for ‘round here ... it would have felt wrong, well not wrong, but you know, not right to do anything else [Okay] It’s nice actually, I don’t suspect I’d have admitted it growing up, but yeah it feels nice to carry on doing something your family have done for however many generations (Farmer 26)

It would have felt wrong doing anything else, going somewhere else (Farmer 6)

Having seen the way in which the boundaries set for children in the farm family during the socialisation process differ quite significantly in the case of those who had entered longstanding family farms, evident above, the experiences of farmers in *this group* seemed initially, contradictory. It is believed however, farmers occupying this group occupy a distinctive position and have, by virtue of their position, become, inadvertently embroiled in the socialisation process; specifically, it was identified all farmers in this group were *exclusively* one of only two male children and as identified in 3 out of the 4 cases¹⁴, were the younger of the two, by a maximum of 2 years (see Table 6.1).

¹⁴ Unfortunately, due to the open nature of the interviews, the age difference between Farmer 14 and his brother failed to be identified during the interview

Table 6.1

Farmers and their brothers: characteristics

Farmer	Evidence: Age Difference Between	Evidence: Existence of Other Siblings
Farmer 2	[Okay ... and um, how much older was he then?] Two years and there was just Graham and I, no one else to consider, so it made sense to buy it
Farmer 14	[age difference unidentified]	[And it was just you two, you and your brother? No other ...] Yeah just me and my brother
Farmer 26	[What was the age difference?] 18 months ... so not much	[And sorry, you might have already said ... so you were the only children?] Yeah, yeah that's right my love, just me and my brother
Farmer 6	[What was the age difference?] Um ... what between us? [Aha] Nearly two years [...] [Okay ... and how did it kind of ... how did it transpire that you came here and he ...] Yeah, well, he was a couple of years older, so yeah, that's just what happened	[And it was just your brother and you?] Yeah [I mean, no other brothers or sisters?] No, no, just me and him

Interestingly, some of these farmers articulated how the proximity in ages to their older brothers meant a similar level of involvement in farm work during their childhoods'.

We were always out on the farm together helping Dad, you know ... he wasn't much older than me, so there wasn't anything he could do that I couldn't do ... on the farm I mean (Farmer 6)

[How did it transpire, I mean how did it happen that both of you were interested in farming?] Not sure really ... not much of an age gap I suppose [Aha, what do you mean?] We were always out on the farm together, made us quite competitive I guess [What was the age difference?] 18 months ... so not much [Yeah, I can imagine] We were quite competitive [laughter] or very competitive [laughter] ... I'd desperately try and keep up with him ... we'd nag and nag Dad if we could give this and that a go and eventually he'd give in (Farmer 26)

Hsu (1965; 1971) observed how rivalry is often heightened amongst farmer's sons who are 'nearly equal'. **In contrast**, a farmer from an *Established Family Farm*, with a significantly younger brother stated:

I think, I was maybe more encouraged, like to be out and about on the farm [...] because I was older too [...] it meant I got more involved (Farmer 17)

I propose that the similarity in ages and thus involvement in their respective farms meant that the younger of the brothers, have become inadvertently embroiled in the socialisation process; the line

between the succeeding child and the non-succeeding child becomes blurred, and they become socialised in a similarly narrow way.

The experiences of farmers in this group were notably akin in some ways to those who entered via longstanding family farms.

Initially, they experienced similar difficulty in articulating their motivations for farming.

Not exactly sure why I wanted to farm when I think about it [laughs] ... I obviously enjoyed it, but yeah (Farmer 2)

You know what? I'm not entirely sure (Farmer 26)

Similarly one farmer jokingly remarked how he was unsure what motivated him.

I've got a bit of a problem in my head I suspect ... not really sure why I wanted to really (Farmer 14)

In addition, just like farmers who entered via longstanding family farmers, their upbringing as active members of the farm has meant their identity as farmers had become engrained in who they were from such an early age; to have sought an alternative career would have been to give up an integral part of their identity.

I milked cows since I was seven [So you ...] It's just what I've grown up doing, didn't know anything else to be honest (Farmer 14)

Furthermore, farmers in this group actively recognised they had little opportunity to be involved in *anything but* farming.

I don't think there was anything else I was going do to be honest with you ... didn't know much else (Farmer 6)

It was just a natural move for me, wanting to farm (Farmer 14)

Interestingly, given the proposal that the distinction between older and younger sibling has become blurred, one participant in this group conflated his experiences of growing up, with that of his brother's, rendering them *both* 'stuck' in farming.

We [him and his brother] grew up on the farm ... never really knew of anything else really ... what else would *we* have done? (Farmer 26)

Although substantial involvement in the farm had shaped their identity, farmers in this group recalled being very aware and surprisingly accepting of the fact they would be unlikely to ultimately succeed to the family farm, by virtue of the fact they were the younger sibling.

The surprising compliance by non-succeeding children was also observed by Salamon (1992: 140), which she attributes to the inculcation of *all* children to the ideal of continuity, which prioritises the eldest son and thus assures support of the potential successor by other siblings. Instilled with this understanding from an early age, farmers in this group talked of their brother's identification as 'just what happened'; resonant of the aforementioned 'predefined path' set for eligible children.

[And why did you leave, as opposed to your brother I mean?] He was the oldest, simple as that my love ... farm wasn't big enough for the both of us, so me coming here was the next best thing (Farmer 26)

In the absence of difference in cultural boundaries set for these brothers, their belief that 'it was always going to go to the older brother' is a testament to the strength of wider social norms (Gasson and Errington, 1993) or what Salamon (1992) terms cultural schemes, that uphold primogeniture as 'the norm'. The acquisition of the *Extension Farm* should be seen as a means of satisfying non-succeeding children's attachment to both the locality and the occupation, whilst conforming to social norms and expectations; although a 'by-product', the *Extension Farms* and their farmers, are no less a consequence of the ideal of continuity.

Although the work of Moreno-Pérez *et al* (2011) has made a first step in highlighting the existence of multi-family farm arrangements as 'conscious and stable schemes', they narrowly suggest the organisational form *purely* as an economic survival strategy, with no consideration for their social function, as revealed in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

6.1.2.2 Newly Established Family Farms: Separate Family Farms

In line with Errington's (2002: 1) observation that "family continuity in farming does not necessarily imply geographic immobility", in addition to those farmers who had entered farming via an extension of the home farm, a small but notable number of farmers (3) had continued in farming separately¹⁵ from their 'home' farm. In all 3 cases, farmers were younger siblings, brought up on family farms rendering them non-eligible in terms of succession to the home farm.

We started elsewhere, my father had a small family farm, but unfortunately I was a bit far down the pecking order being one of four [laughs]. So I left and ended up renting (Farmer 23)

¹⁵ This does not necessarily mean that farms were 'far away' from their home farm, but denotes they are very much run independently from their home farms

My husband left school when he was 15, went out to work ... his first job was in Crediton, working for a family farm [...] and he was pig farming on his own and saved enough money to come here ... his older brother stayed at the home farm if you like [...] he stayed with their father, his brother I mean ... stayed with their father, both of whom have passed away now, sadly (Farmer 27's wife)

Continuity as a Value

Although Laband and Lentz (1983: 1) simply attribute this occupational attachment to the transferability of 'farm general skills' that, "generally follow the individual without regard to specific location of the land", farmers in this group reported a much deeper and far more meaningful connection to the family tradition of farming itself, which, as demonstrated in the following excerpts, was a source of great strength and thus hard to pull away from.

It wasn't a coincidence that I went farming, put it that way (Farmer 23)

So yeah ... his father was one of eleven, so it ... some of them got set up with farms, some didn't ... but yeah the most of his family were in farming in some capacity, so yeah Edward just followed into it really (Farmer 27's wife)

The attachment to the *occupation* of farming is a key observation here. Although the narratives of those who succeeded to longstanding *Established Family Farms* (see Section 6.1.1) depict the importance of a complex attachment to the land, area and occupation, Errington (2002: 1) notes how "there is a second pattern in which the prime attachment is to the occupation of farming rather than to a piece of land", which is evident in a number of cases in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. These farmers have been brought up in a family who, as a unit, strongly value, and are thus committed to continuity of the farm through the generations, and non-succeeding children are no less the part of this commitment, they were just unable to fulfil this commitment on the home farm. Similarly, Salamon (1992: 140) observed how amongst yeoman families, the farm was stressed above all else to *all* children, and that 'inculcated with the same goal', i.e. succession, non-succeeding children often did *whatever* was necessary to support succeeding siblings and thus the family, in achieving this goal, which typically involved significant involvement in farm work as children and adolescents, with no eventual recompense. Aside from the morality of this 'exploitation' of non-eligible children, as Salamon (1992: 141) describes it, and as evidenced here by farmers from *Separate Family Farms*, is these children's subsequent attachment to and desire to continue the occupation.

One farmer revealed the extent of his *entire* family's involvement in farming.

[How long have your family been associated with farming?] 9 generations I think, and I don't know anyone in the extended family that has been anything but a farmer (Farmer 23)

Although these farmers understood that barring significant change in familial circumstances they would not succeed to the home farm, they have been immersed in a family with these values and in these cases it is not incongruous to suggest these farmers have unconsciously absorbed the family value of continuity and in the absence of the ability to maintain attachment to the farm itself, they have satisfied the inculcated and wider desire for continuity by continuing in the occupation.

Involvement in the Farm

Although frequently and heavily involved in farm work whilst growing up, these farmers recognised their involvement as merely transitory in nature, supporting older and therefore eligible siblings as part of their cumulative advancement to become 'the farmer' and thus the family's wider commitment to continuity.

Yeah, yeah I suppose I started *helping* in my own little way when I was sort of 7 or 8, 6, 7, 8, nobody ever told me to, it's just what I enjoyed doing, working alongside them [his siblings], and by the time I was 13 or 14, I was milking the cows, not full-time, I was still in school, but you know [...] [And did you ever feel any kind of pressure to continue into farming?] No the opposite really ... it was never what was expected of *me*, the opposite [Okay] I mean, I wasn't that bad in school, so the pressure was to go and get a decent job [laughs] (Farmer 23)

Despite the transitory nature of their participation, they were, as evident in the following narratives, no less consumed by and fond of the farming lifestyle, making it a future career choice.

I think it's, I suppose it's influenced because you're brought up with it, because it's a, it's a living rather than a job, and um, I just got to love it really [...] I just always seemed to come back to farming, in my heart that's what I wanted to do (Farmer 23)

Cassidy (2012: 5) also observed a similar connection amongst non-farming emerging adults¹⁶ from farming families, who although had migrated to urban areas, "were not however, detached from the farm in its conceptualisation as a domestic or home space", instead she suggests they were simply detached "from the possibility of settling down on it". Although Cassidy's work focusses specifically on *non-farming* emerging adults, the distinction she makes between attachment to the farm as a domestic space and attachment to the farm as the setting of one's career, is applicable to farmers in this group, in that, regardless of the nature and intensity of one's involvement on the

¹⁶ Cassidy (2012) defines an emerging adult as period between adolescence and adulthood (18-30)

home farm, non-inheriting children *still* have and maintain a connection to the farm as their domestic or home space.

Unlike farmers in the previous groups, these farmers chiefly cited intrinsic factors as motivations for farming; valuing farming as an activity in its own right and free from obligation to previous generations.

Livestock, isn't it (Farmer 1)

He continued:

It's the attitude you've got towards the livestock you keep that you want to keep them in the best sort of environment you possibly can (Farmer 1)

Similarly, Farmer 23 recalled his enjoyment of working with animals.

[What motivated you to farm then?] Certainly not money [laughter] ... I suppose I love the outdoors [...] I just love the outdoors [...] Predominantly livestock, I love working with animals [...] anything from dogs, to pigs, cats, chickens, I just love animals, so I suppose, in that sense it just suits me really (Farmer 23)

Compared to farmers in the aforementioned groups, who both reported a lack of opportunity to do anything else, the narratives of farmers in this group differ considerably, with strong and frequent reference to entry into farming being their decision. Emphasis is added in the following excerpts to denote the idea of choice.

My husband used to, well he was a labourer, he was a labourer, and then uh, then the gentleman, the previous owner, I can remember his name now, Jack ... Jack wasn't it? [...] Then when he died, my husband had the opportunity to, take the farm, get the farm, and that's how we started really ... on a very small scale (Farmer 1's wife)

I *did have the opportunity* when I was in school to do other, to look at other careers, but uh, um, I just always seemed to come back to farming, in my heart that's what I wanted to do I think, basically [...] [And did you ever feel any kind of pressure to continue into farming?] [...] I was *interested in overseas development* and uh, uh, I did, I did seriously look at that for a little while I just came back to that ... I know I'd miss the farm, miss the animals, so *I came back* to it, yeah (Farmer 23)

The preceding sections have explored the entry of farmers into farming in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Although, entry via an *Established Family Farm* was, perhaps as expected, the most common route of entry, analysis revealed other ways in which farmers entered farming,

which although less prominent, are no less noteworthy and, critically, no less the product of family farming ideals. To this end, this research proposes previous academic interest in farm family reproduction has too narrowly fixated on the reasons for, and the transfer of the *home farm*, from one generation to the next (i.e. typically a father passing the farm to the child), or what Moreno-Pérez *et al* (2011) terms *unifamily farms*. When, as evident in this case and others (see Moreno-Pérez *et al*, 2011), the influence of the farm family's commitment to continuity extends (physically) beyond linear generational farm transfer, by informing and shaping the physical manifestation of farms 'outside' the conventional linear model. It is vital to recognise the *true* 'extent' of the family farm's reach, by widening our view of the influence of the ideal of continuity.

As demonstrated in column one in Figure 6.3, and is the case for the majority of farmers interviewed in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, farms pass in a linear way (typically through the male line), through the generations. But, as denoted by the second and third columns, farmers from *Newly Established Family Farms*, including both *Extension* and *Separate Farms*, are no less the product of family farming ideals and just because they are not farming on the same land as their predecessors, does not preclude them from being motivated by their family's connection to the area and/or the occupation of farming. For example, the establishment of a *Separate Farm* (represented in the third column of Figure 6.3), a result of the inculcation of non-eligible children into the farming way of life during their time on the home farm, their technical knowledge and understanding is, in part, likely to stem from their time on the home farm and equally, their feelings towards the occupation, and thus their outlook and values, and even their behaviour are in part shaped by the home farm. An appreciation of the way farmers have entered farming (beyond the traditional *unifamily* model), and recognition of these 'connections' to the home farm, affords a better, more sensitive understanding of farmer behaviour. Whereas previous research may assume a farmer who has entered via a newly purchased farm is free from family tradition, emotional ties and so on, as Figure 6.3 denotes, although physically detached, they bear little resemblance to entirely *New Entrants* (discussed below in Section 6.1.3).

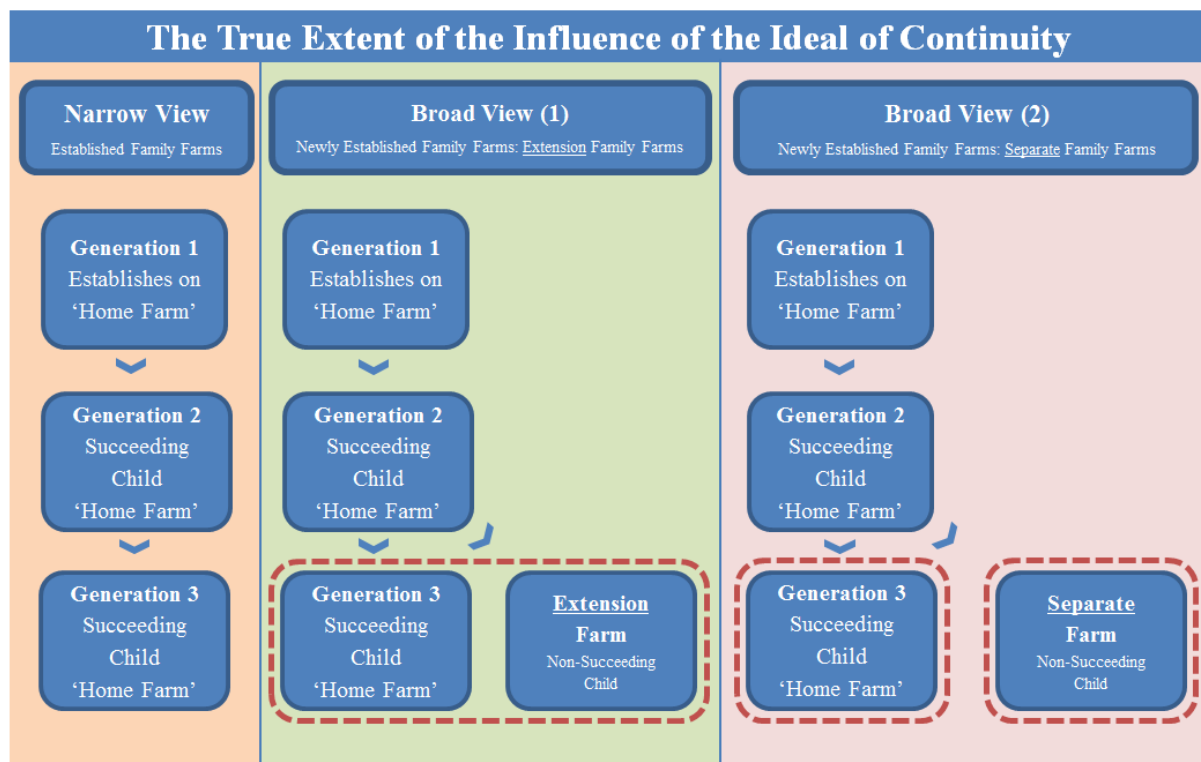


Figure 6.3 The true extent of the influence of the ideal of continuity: widening our view of intergenerational transfer

6.1.3 New Entrants

Notably, of the 26 farmers who participated, only 2 were new entrants, in that they had no immediate previous connection to farming. The experiences of these farmers differed considerably to the previous groups, *entirely* based on choice and *completely* unencumbered by tradition and family ties or expectations.

The following narratives, although very contrasting in their nature, clearly denote the choice farmers in this group exercised. As above, emphasis is added to signify this idea.

Neither of us had family, direct family in farming. We just saved up. We started off with a, my husband had a green grocers [Okay] Then when we got married [...] and we bought an 18 acre smallholding and did calf rearing [Okay] Then we sold the both and bought a larger farm and then um, it got too much [...] and then we came down here [Okay] *Both always wanted to farm*, my husband, he used to go out as a kid, used to bunk off school and go out with the local contractor [...] I just love, I like the stock, he likes the um machinery and the arable (Farmer 22)

I trained as a scientist [...] I worked in overseas conservation, actually I did Coral Reef Fishery management, actually [...] and I worked in the Caribbean for a Development Agency organisation, that kind of thing, and it felt a little fraudulent at times because

there's lots of wildlife and good stuff at home and it's not being looked after [...] so that's what is part of the reason why I came back from International Conservation, there were other reasons as well, my husband had been, he spent 20-25 years now in tourism [...] sustainable tourism, lots of overseas work, he sold his share in the business and we decided to do something together and for me that's what I wanted to do was um, do a little bit for the British countryside, actually [...] to ensure some small patch [...] was not being wrecked by modern agriculture [...] and I wanted to do some small practical thing (Farmer 29)

What makes these farmers distinctive is that farming had never previously been 'on the agenda' for them, in that they never had any connection to the industry, familial or otherwise. Farming was actively and independently chosen in these cases. Although their reasons for entering farming differ considerably, in each case they were predicated on what *they* had wanted to do. Farmer 29 is a good example of this. Having trained as a scientist and worked in overseas coral reef fishery management, entering farming represented a significant, and perhaps, from an outsider's perspective, given her non-farming background, a somewhat arbitrary change in direction; critically, her entrance into the industry was one that was driven *purely* by her and her husband's desires, skills and interests, not by familial pressure or expectation, or 'not knowing any different' for example. The farmers in this group were much more forthcoming and to the point when asked how they had come to be in farming, indicative of the fact it was clearly a choice for them.

Whereas, the decision to enter farming for those with family connections to the industry involved the simultaneous consideration of various factors, or what Gill (2013) describes as a 'web of competing responsibility', by virtue of their lack of connections to the industry or a specific farm, they were free from factors, such as the responsibility to previous generations, familial pressures to continue and so on; their decision to farm was more of a *choice* than farmers with a previous connection to the industry.

6.2 Importance of Successor Identification

Although it is widely understood that "the prime objective for many family businesses is [...] the desire to maintain control and to pass on a secure and sound business to the next generation" (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 94), there is also increasing anticipation that as modernity gives way to late- or post- modernity (Giddens, 1994) farmers' life courses are becoming progressively autonomous and individual (Villa, 1999; Silvasti, 2012). To add to this, a wealth of literature (Ward, 1996; Kaine *et al*, 1997; Villa, 1999; Ball and Wiley, 2005; Price and Conn, 2012; Barclay *et al*, 2012) has begun to recognise the increasing hardships associated with the lifestyle and thus the inequities of intergenerational succession. For example, Price and Conn (2012) recently equated the transfer of the farm to 'the handover of a poisoned chalice', and as a possible 'millstone around

the successor's neck', raising questions as to the morality of wanting or encouraging the transfer.

Villa (1999: 338) describes these issues as the 'double messages' in the 'question of succession'. On the one hand there is the strong belief in farming as something that should be handed from parents to their children. On the other, is the increasing concern over the economic viability of farming and the difficulties of the lifestyle. To this end, the importance of potential intergenerational transfer was understandably a salient issue.

Passing on the farm to the next generation was particularly important for those farming *Established Family Farms*.

[Okay ... and is it important for you to identify a next generation?] If I'm honest, yes it really is (Farmer 21)

Well I think it was important yeah [...] I'd hate to think it was ever sold (Farmer 24)

I'm happy my son's involved, keeping the flag flying, it would have upset me to see the farm go in my life time (Farmer 9)

Yeah definitely important, it's what it's all about isn't it? (Farmer 3)

Yeah I suppose it is important [...] yeah it is important (Farmer 17)

Yeah definitely, it's nice to think she wants to do it (Farmer 20)

It's early days on the succession front ... but yeah, it would be nice (Farmer 16)

We are pleased as punch about that, 'cause we can pass it on to the next generation and hopefully, he'll do the same for one of his sons ... (Farmer 18's wife)

I think I would have been disappointed if they'd not wanted to, can't say more than that (Farmer 28)

[For you, was it important to have your son want to farm? You know, was it important to you that he is farming?] Yes, yes I think so (Farmer 4)

The recurring pattern of intergenerational continues to act as a blueprint for action, with a number of farmers in this group situating the importance of successor identification amongst in the farm's historical context.

[Okay ... and is it important for you to identify a next generation?] If I'm honest, yes it really is [Okay] This farm, you know, it's part of our family [...] Purely, 'cause looking at this here, my parents, my Mum used to work a lot on the farm, they used to

work hard, and I remember my Grandparents farming, I remember my grandfather, he was a particularly hardworking man, and I just feel that you know ... what they, what they did for us, back through the years (Farmer 21)

[And was that, was that important to you to um, to identify your son as a successor?] Well I think it was important yeah, it's always been a family farm ... and that's what it's supposed to be (Farmer 24)

[If both of them had not wanted to go into farming do you think, you know would that mean something that would have upset you, or?] Wouldn't have upset me, it ... [Okay] If they were happy with what they were doing, whatever that would have been, I'd have been happy [Okay] Saying that, I'm happy my son's involved, keeping the flag flying (Farmer 9)

[So from your perspective having, um, your family's been on the land a long time, was it important for you to sort of be able to say, 'I know my farm's going to be passed on now, to my son'.] To you was that important? It was *very very* important, it's hard to describe [long pause] um, I think because one looks back to one's grandfather, father and to be able to carry on, it's no mean feat that fact that he's now on the farm that's been in the family for over 100 years (Farmer 5)

The sense that these farmers are farming because of the actions of their ancestors appears to have instilled a strong sense of responsibility to pass the farm on to their successors, resonant of the cyclical nature of intergenerational farm transfer.

Similarly, Gill (2013: 85) observed “the responsibility felt by these farmers may be understood as a desire to pass on to the future what was left to them by the past”. If we understand farmers situation between the past and the future as an important factor in determining their identity, the importance of successor identification, as a means of maintaining said identity, is obvious; as Gill (2013: 85) supposes “without a clear sense of the future, meaning is lost as the flow from past to future is disrupted”.

6.2.1 Passing on the Family Farm: Important and (Increasingly) Desirable

As already suggested, a wealth of literature reports how increasing hardships associated with the lifestyle have overshadowed the importance of successor identification. Although with specific reference to the Australian context, Gill (2013: 90) observes how prolonged economic and environmental difficulty have left farmers reluctant to ‘will farms onto the next generation’ due to their ambivalence about the shape of the future. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, narratives of farmers were laden with concern for the long term economic viability of the farm, “Worries

included, ‘Will it be viable to provide a successor with a suitable income?’, ‘Will it be a millstone around their neck?’ and ‘Will they have no time off like me?’” (Price and Conn, 2012: 101). Farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes had undoubtedly felt the pressures of the challenging economic and environmental context, with particular reference to the difficulty of the last twelve months.

This has been the hardest 12 months ... I mean I’ve been farming since 1978 and this has been the hardest 12 months I’ve ever experienced (Farmer 23)

Well I think this year, this coming year will be the worst year, financially for a while, I would have thought, yeah, ‘cause, because of the way things worked out last summer (Farmer 13)

Obviously last harvest caused us a bit of a knock. It’s pretty poor (Farmer 4)

At the moment we are seeing sort of prices sort of dropping like anything, lamb in particular, you wonder where the end of that’s going to be, sort of the prices of lambs has gotten very low, but I can’t say it’s bad, I’m not going to grumble, so we are going to go for just a good (Farmer 2)

Well, uh, at the present time it isn’t looking very wonderful [...] Not particularly a good time (Farmer 9)

Not rampant, quite frankly. No doubt about it. We *are* in difficult times (Farmer 5)

This year has been bad (Farmer 3)

Although the overwhelming feeling was of difficulty and struggle, a notable number of farmers reported their farm doing ‘okay’ financially.

Not too bad ... If I’m honest (Farmer 21’s wife)

Well, it’s balancing out but ... it’s not great (Farmer 9)

Well ticking along nicely would be the best way of saying it ... you can’t say it’s very good ... it’s certainly not very good (Farmer 18)

I don’t know, it’s just uh, it just ticks over (Farmer 1)

It’s not excellent ... but it’s doing okay. We’re quite positive really (Farmer 17)

Some of these farmers attributed this attainment to personal sacrifice of working particularly long hours.

Not too bad, if I'm honest, providing you don't stop and think that we both do 60, 70 odd hours a week [...] so it would only be about 50 pence an hour if I was being completely truthful (Farmer 21)

My son's working terrifically hard for his returns ... for the hours, it doesn't quite add up (Farmer 9)

Others conflated farm attainment with non-farming activities, when really it was only non-farming activities that were determining their success in comparison to others.

The farm pays, on paper that is, but when I stop and look at the fact that we actually own a bungalow that brings us in £600 a month [Okay] But if you take that out, and you take the rent of the bungalow out ... what the actual farm earns us, as a farm rather than as the little extras, and I mean we are in, I mean we get so much for set aside and all these little bits and pieces that we do, but if you took all the bits out that the actual farm doesn't earn us, um, it's not a big living ... (Farmer 21)

It's probably making a reasonable profit [Okay] *But* we converted two barns when we, soon after we came here and uh there's much more money in it (Farmer 22)

[So, generally then, you're generally quite positive that like you said, the farm is ticking along ...] Yeah, yeah we also got properties down the road (Farmer 1)

Those that were able to be reasonably positive about the current economic situation attributed their relative resistance to the wider context to the work of previous generations.

Well if this is the fourth generation on the farm, and we're not doing reasonably well now, then it's a bit sad then isn't it? [So you're fairly established then?] Yeah that's exactly what I mean [Okay] If we had to buy it twenty year ago ... and we got a mortgage or something then it would be a frightening thing ... but yeah like I said, we um, we're established enough now, so we don't have to buy a lot in (Farmer 21)

Well, it's balancing out but ... it's not great [Okay] But there you are, I mean we haven't got any mortgage or anything like that, we're quite well set up [Yeah, that must be quite nice] If you got a mortgage I think today, we do okay, um, it's not been brilliant 'cause of the weather but generally we do okay, because we're well established (Farmer 9)

We haven't had to buy the land, not a massive amount of mortgage, well none at the present moment, so yeah we're in a good position (Farmer 17)

This propensity to refer to the role of farmers' predecessors further expounds their importance to the farmer's position and reaffirms how in family farming the present is very much informed by the past. Although Gill (2013) recognises how the past "imposes on our sense of selves by providing us with a context in which to operate, and by giving us a set of rules to live by" I believe, as demonstrated here, the past can have a much more explicit influence upon the present. Simply, the accomplished acts of predecessors, such as the purchase of the farm, have, in these cases, unequivocally influenced the lives for whom they are now the predecessors (Geertz, 1973).

Although the contemporary sense of hardship felt amongst farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes is consistent with the recent findings of Price and Conn (2012) and Gill (2013), unlike these studies these difficulties appear to have very little bearing on farmers' confidence in the future of the industry, nor their desire to pass on the farm to the next generation. In stark contrast, this concern was almost entirely absent from farmers' narratives in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes; succession, where a possibility, appeared both an important *and* desirable option for farmers, aligning Villa's 'double messages'. Furthermore, and of particular interest here, is that this desirability was in often explicitly framed within the food security imperative, with specific reference to the widely propagated projections of global population growth; the following passages from farmers, sum up this point particularly well.

[Okay and thinking about the future of farming, what do you think the prospects are?]
[...] Yeah, if it ticks along like it is now, it's alright, we make quite a reasonable living and you've got to think it's going to get better if there's going to be more mouths to feed, as we keep hearing in the press and that. Um, yeah [said optimistically] [Okay, and what about in terms of the kind of wider idea of farming, like farming as a career?] I think it's a good opportunity full stop. Yes, if the population increases to that number they are all saying, they will need ... well it's, the beef trade is up now, and that's purely 'cause it's not 'cause of this country, it's all China [Yeah, yes, definitely] [...] so that answers your question before really, it's a very very good opportunity for the likes of our two, because they've got, its handed to them, there's no costs [...] But yeah, I think it will stay fairly buoyant, because, there's going to be how many by 2050? [I've got some figures here. So it's going to reach 9 billion by 2050, which is going to mean an increase in food of 70%] 70%? I mean, really we can't go wrong can we? [...] So I think, we can't go wrong and us farmers, well um, not me so much, but the next lot, it could turn out very good [...] That's why I think my daughter's got such a good chance here, such a good opportunity here [Is it important for you to have a successor? Would you ... is there an expectation on your daughter to do that?] Well, um, yeah I suppose it is important, I'd like to think one of

them would want do it, if they don't then, um, yeah it is important [...] unless she says no she don't want it, and she'd be an absolute idiot (Farmer 17)

I think 10 years, I'm *very* optimistic ... obviously I'm older so much longer than that, it wouldn't affect me quite so much but um, very optimistic over the 10 year period, yeah [And what's making you so optimistic about that kind of period?] Um, I think that um, well basically, they are going to struggle to feed the world [Yeah] There's going be a massive population and um, the uh, the last 20 years, there's been, there was surpluses in Europe back in the 80s and too much food, and we couldn't export it and the markets just weren't there ... but now it's becoming the reverse, I think Europe is going have to compete with foreign markets for food and um, I think they desperately need young farmers and I think that puts my sons in a good position, I would have like to have thought (Farmer 23)

Given the absence of farmers' voices from the current debate surrounding food security (Fish *et al*, 2013), farmers' propensity to refer to the food security imperative, specifically, the projections of world population growth, with no prompt to do so, is a key finding. Not only does this reveal that how these agendas are being understood and interpreted by farming publics, but also demonstrates that the global context is, to some extent, actively shaping farmers' feelings towards passing on the farm to their next generation.

Although other farmers did not explicitly articulate this connection between the prospects of farming and successor identification as Farmers 9 and 10 did, a key finding is undoubtedly that, unlike previous research (Kaine *et al*, 1997; Ball and Wiley, 2005; Price and Conn, 2012; Barclay *et al*, 2012) which documented farmers' concerns about passing on the farm that would have been unlikely to provide adequate income, the majority of farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, although insistent that they 'didn't have a crystal ball' and that in farming, 'anything could happen', were generally, incredibly positive about the future long term opportunities (for their potential successors) in farming.

Interestingly, this positivity was strongly situated in the context of global population increases and associated increases in demand for food, in contrast to the "neither untainted optimism nor dismissive pessimism about this imperative" observed by Fish *et al* (2013: 46); a finding that, in itself, goes some way in addressing the absence of farmer voices within the food security agenda previously highlighted (Fish *et al*, 2013).

I think the general prospects is good, for farming [Oh yeah, what makes you say that?]
Well people are going to need feeding aren't they? [Yeah] And the population is growing faster than ever [Okay] So yeah, I think it'll tick along (Farmer 21)

If the population is growing all the time then, it's got to be good (Farmer 24)

One hopes, you know that things will be fairly buoyant. One can only really go back to the fact that world population is increasing all the time, and the amount of acres that are there and can be uh put into production are diminishing (Farmer 5)

Well, yeah I think there's going to be a good future [...] generally, I think there's going to be a good future and money to be made really, population is rising and that's only going to mean, well hopefully, it's going to mean a better deal (Farmer 20)

At the moment, with the world shortage of most things, you've got to say that the prospects are brighter ... for sure (Farmer 18)

Well, I think the prospects of agriculture really are quite good looking forward, because the population's increasing, so generally, the trend should be upwards (Farmer 28)

Well ... I would have thought that [the prospects] they should be reasonably good [...] I would have thought the long term future would have been, was reasonably good really, because of growth in population [...] I don't think we can ignore that the population is growing, and all those people are going to need feeding [laughs] ... so yeah (Farmer 4)

Although the general consensus was positive, a minority of farmers expressed concern for the future of the industry and thus their potential successor's entry into farming, more consistent with that of earlier research. However, as observed by Fish *et al* (2013: 46), for these farmers "it is less that productive goals are in and of themselves problematical, but rather, the agro-food context in which farmers were expected to currently compete and grow". One fourth generation farmer articulates this distinction particularly well, with reference to his son's future in the industry.

The Chinese and the Indians ... it sounds like they want to eat meat [Yeah] It's like ... it's all going to be like sheep prices are going through the roof, but *something* will happen that will mean farmers won't be better off, I'd say (Farmer 15)

He suggested:

Yeah sure everything tells you that prices *should* go up ... the population's going up so many million every year, and you know, they're not making any more land, and there's only the same amount of acres that you can produce food on, so that tells you that it *must* get better ... but I wouldn't put too much money on it (Farmer 15)

Ultimately, he did not want his son to continue in farming:

I'd like to talk him out of it really, um, 'cause I know like his friends will grow up to be electricians and builders and that, and they'll earn so much money, I just don't think the day-to-day running is not economically viable to my mind, never will be (Farmer 15)

Understanding of this as a minority viewpoint was further confirmed by the farmer's own admission; "I'm going to tell you everything different from what other farmers have told you" (Farmer 15).

Which he attributed to his new perspective, having been "in it [farming] and now slightly out of it" as he increased worked as a self-employed fencing contractor. Similarly, the remaining farmers who expressed concern for the future of the industry and thus their potential successor's entry into farming, did not refute the potential of the increasing demands on the industry, but rather the agro-food context in which farmers worked.

I feel the potential is there [...] [but] I've got me doubts ... everyone's saying it'll come better one day but I just don't see it you know ... you just keep getting knock after knock, supermarkets, viruses attacking the lambs, TB's doing the rounds ... that's just getting worse and worse ... probably won't do the industry any good (Farmer 24)

[How do you feel about the longer term prospects of the industry then?] Well, it's a bit infuriating when you see a bottle of mineral water in the supermarket shelf, dearer than a pint of milk [...] if supermarkets have the monopoly then yeah it won't get any better, regardless (Farmer 19)

For those from *Newly Established Family Farms* as well as *New Entrants*, the importance of succession identification was evident, but arguably less intense than those from longstanding family farms, who, as above, were able to situate the importance of successor identification amongst the farm's historical context. Although they undoubtedly valued identification of a next generation, it was not 'at all costs', in that farmers in this group frequently qualified its importance, for example, it was only important *if* the next generation want to farm.

I think that I'd far prefer them to be happy in what they do basically, whatever they chose to do, beside be a criminal or whatever [laughs] ... as long as it was constructive, but having said that, it was nice to have them, to have them want to come into the farm, yes (Farmer 23,)

Well that's how I'd like it to go yes, I'd like it to uh, to um, to see this farm continue in the future ... but whether it's possible, whether that'll happen, but yeah that would be my main aim, it would be nice yeah (Farmer 14)

It's possible that one of them might be interested in taking it over ... and great, you know that would be great if that's what they wanted, but I would certainly not put any pressure on them (Farmer 29)

Interestingly, Farmer 2, farming an *Extension Farm* (see below) attributed his conciliation to the absence of a historic connection to the farm, compared with his brother who had remained on the home farm. This is consistent with the belief that “the two forms of inheritance [inheritance of the just the occupation and the farm] couple together to make for a stronger tie binding farmers to their family's past than if either the occupation or the farm were inherited alone” (Wilkinson, 2009: 180). For these farmers, failure to recruit a next generation has (generationally-speaking) limited implications in that there is not a chain to break, although as already suggested, *Newly Established Family Farmers*, have been brought up to value such continuity which explains why successor identification is still ‘nice’ (as referred to by Farmer 23, Farmer 14 and Farmer 2).

I'm proud of my tradition, you know, it would be nice if my son carried on farming, but I'm not overly worried if he didn't ... um, yeah ... In a way, I guess because we haven't been here on this farm for generations, that there isn't that historic, going back over the line, whereas my brother at the home farm has been in the family, for over a hundred years, and um, and I could see that there could be a little bit of pressure on my brother and his family to want to carry on (Farmer 2)

Although evidently less intense for newly established farmers, the notion that succession was the ‘ultimate goal’ was evident in equal measure across all groups.

[One of my questions is, you know, um, are you happy that you've identified someone to keep the farm going?] I think it's actually sort of what you actually work for (Farmer 1)

It's all about producing offspring really ... that's what it's about (Farmer 15)

In one sense, we don't feel it's ours [...] it's strange really, we're just looking after it for the next lot, so they can keep it going (Farmer 21)

Yeah, it's nice, it's what it's about I guess ... passing it on, 'cause it's all the hard work that you've done benefiting them, it's not been a waste then (Farmer 10)

[Thinking about identifying your son as a successor, was that important to you, were

you pleased when he came back on to the farm?] Yeah definitely important, it's what it's all about isn't it? [Okay and do you think if he'd have, you know, not expressed any interest in farming that would have been difficult or ...?] I don't know, I most likely would have sold up ... wouldn't have stayed very long, *what's the point?* (Farmer 3)

But why is succession such a universally important objective? Irrespective of the farmer's length or type of connection to farming, is an implicit desire for immortality. For Gasson and Errington (1993: 185) "the business becomes so tied up with personal identity, that its maintenance into future generations preserves that identity and provides a means for the present generation to influence the lives of generations as yet unborn". In one exceptional case, a farmer remarked on this fulfilment:

With the land ... as long as your family are still on the land, then you're still part of it ... even when you're 6ft under [laughs] (Farmer 11)

Weiner (1992: 7-8) elucidates this desire particularly well, suggesting the desire to pass objects through generations is "grounded in the need to secure permanence in a serial world that is always subject to loss and decay ... [such objects, possessions etc.] bring a vision of permanence into a social world that is always in the process of change".

More obvious was the desire to evade the possibility of the farmer's hard work and (time and monetary) investment passing out of the family.

[Would it be nice to think that the farm was going to be passed on?] Yes, yes [What makes you say that?] Well, I suppose we feel that we've worked very hard here and brought it up to ... um, I mean we've made everything easy to work [Okay] The trouble is, if it was sold off it would probably be all broken up and all the hard work wasted [Yeah] [...] I'm pretty sure it would just, you know be sold off as one field there and one field there (Farmer 22)

Well, yeah, I think everything you do, you do it for, you do it for the ... it sounds pompous saying for the greater good, but you do, you do it with a view that whoever comes after you will appreciate what you do (Farmer 16)

I'd hate to think it was ever sold ... all the work you did, just gone, nothing to show for it (Farmer 24)

It's nice to think that everything you've done and worked for, is helping them, you know? It's nice ... (Farmer 11)

6.2.2 Farmers' Understanding of Food Security

Following these unprompted references to the food security agenda, respondents were explicitly asked the open question “what do you understand by the term food security?”. Surprisingly, despite farmers’ unforeseen propensity to situate their outlook in the context of the emergent agenda, and seemingly good understanding of some associated sentiments i.e. global population growth, many farmers defined food security in terms of food safety and traceability. Interestingly, Fish *et al* (2013: 43) also noted “somewhat surprisingly [...] the *most frequently occurring* approach to the term food security revealed by the survey was based on issues of food safety, quality and traceability” (emphasis added). Although not the most frequently occurring approach to the term, Fish *et al* observed how a notable number of farmers defined food security in this way.

Um [long pause] goes back to traceability I suppose, doesn't it, where it's come from, we have to get everything right, like you from the passports to the cattle to the ear tag numbers and all the paperwork done properly and yet you know, you're bringing out all these things that are happening behind the scenes that are wrong [...] so it's about making sure the food is safe, and we know where it's come from and what's gone into it (Farmer 13)

Making sure we have a safe food, so we know where it's come from, and what's gone in it, I think, that's what I understand of it ... making sure we can trace where it's, where it's come from I suppose (Farmer 3)

Food security to me, well for me, it means basically not eating anything off this farm [Okay] Because I don't know where it's come from or what's happened to it, and how the animals were looked after or anything like that, whether it's safe to eat (Farmer 11)

Well to me, um, it's about uh, you know ... knowing where food has come from, knowing what's in it, and that it's safe I suppose ... making sure it's safe [Okay] Yeah, me personally, I'd say it was about it being safe, making sure what we're eating, you know where it's come from (Farmer 14)

[Have you heard of the term food security?] Food security? Yes, I think so [What does it mean to you? [...]] Well from my point of view would be so that we don't import foot and mouth [Okay] And any diseases from abroad really [Okay] Yeah, yeah um and I suppose anything that any farmers sell is fit to be used [Okay] [...] To be honest I think they've gone over the top about this horse meat thing (Farmer 22)

Puzzled by farmers’ understanding of the term, Fish *et al* (2013) carried out further analysis. They identified, statistically, that smaller farms were more likely to understand food security in terms of

food safety and traceability which they attribute to smaller farms “serving the local market for which issues of traceability, provenance and quality are already probably quite important” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 44). Although this connection to local markets is likely to have influenced farmers in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, understanding was likely to have been swayed by the prevalence of the ‘horse meat adulteration scandal’ that dominated the media at the time of many of the interviews. In some instances the impact of the scandal, which emerged in early February 2013, was, perhaps understandably explicit in farmers’ definition of food security.

Well, it’s about knowing where food has come from ... they are saying that if everything could be traced back now, with these horses and that ... they are finding out that they are not (Farmer 24)

His wife added:

You just wonder what does slip through ... you know meant coming from Romania, I hadn’t heard of it before ... and all of a sudden you get a crisis and you find out a little bit more about what’s been happening (Farmer 24’s wife)

[Yeah ... okay ... so my next question is quite simply, what’s your understanding of the term food security?] It’s a joke ... that’s what it is ... the horse scandal meat scandal says it all [Okay] You know why food was coming over from Romania don’t you? [Price?] Well yeah price ... but mainly ‘cause they got a tax on horses out there now ... so they’re culling their horses to get them off the road (Farmer 25)

Although Farmer 23 was eventually able to define food security, he demonstrated the impact of the ‘horse meat adulteration scandal’ on understanding:

Well, part of me thinks it would be the threat of the wrong meat getting in the burgers, but I suppose it’s about you know securing food supplies (Farmer 23)

One farmer was completely unable to offer a definition of the term food security.

I’m not quite sure really (Farmer 21)

Although initially, results from Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes appeared to corroborate the suggestion of Fish *et al* (2013), that a significant number of farmers simply did not *understand* the term food security¹⁷, further analysis revealed that this was not the case. Instead, and as will be demonstrated below and in Table 6.2, participants’ inability to define the term, or tendency to define it in terms of food safety or traceability when explicitly asked, as observed both here and by

¹⁷ Specifically, when asked what they understood by the term food security, 46 per cent of respondents either “left the question unanswered” or “stated that they did not know what food security meant” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 44)

Fish *et al* (2013), is not indicative of their *actual understanding* of the food security discourse and associated issues and is just a problem caused by use of the term ‘food security’ itself; farmers have simply failed to associate the term with the imperative, and in reality, generally, have a good grasp of the concept. Engagement with entire farmer transcripts during the analysis revealed that a number of the farmers who when asked directly were either unable to define the food security, or defined it in terms of safety and traceability, had elsewhere in the interview, freely and instinctively, in that they were unprompted, accurately referred to the discourse and demonstrated a basic grasp of the imperative (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2
Farmers’ understandings of food security

Farmer	‘Unprompted’ reference to food security discourse	‘Prompted’ definition of food security
Farmer 13	I think, farming is, or what is produced in farming is in increasing demand ... population increasing rapidly	Um [long pause] goes back to traceability I suppose, doesn’t it, where it’s come from, we have to get everything right, like you from the passports to the cattle to the ear tag numbers and all the paperwork done properly and yet you know, you’re bringing out all these things that are happening behind the scenes that are wrong [...] so it’s about making sure the food is safe, and we know where it’s come from and what’s gone into it
Farmer 3	I’ve read stuff saying farming should pick up with the population growing exponentially [...] But generally, yeah I think with the global populations rising and rising, that should at some level be felt by farmers	Making sure we have a safe food, so we know where it’s come from, and what’s gone in it, I think, that’s what I understand of it ... making sure we can trace where it’s, where it’s come from I suppose ...
Farmer 11	And one’s got to think about the fact that the population’s going up and up ... and with that is ... comes a bigger demand for food all over the world ... which is set to continue ... well I guess it’ll stop eventually, level out but yeah	[Okay ... so my next question, um, well basically what does the term food security mean to you?] Food security to me, well for me, it means basically not eating anything off this farm [Okay] Because I don’t know where it’s come from or what’s happened to it, and how the animals were looked after or anything like that ... whether it’s safe to eat
Farmer 14	You can’t ignore the fact that demand for food is on the up ... and farming’s obviously at the centre of that	Well to me, um, it’s about uh, you know ... knowing where food has come from, knowing what’s in it, and that it’s safe I suppose ... making sure it’s safe [Okay] Yeah, me personally, I’d say it was about it being safe, making sure what we’re eating, you know where it’s come from
Farmer 21	I think the general prospects is good, for farming I mean ... [Oh yeah, what makes you say that?] Well people are going to need feeding aren’t they? [Yeah] And the population is growing faster than ever [Okay] So yeah, I think it’ll tick along	I’m not quite sure really

Farmers who did offer a definition of food security often stressed that that is what it means *to them* and was thus open to interpretation.

Food security *to me, well for me*, it means basically not eating anything off this farm (Farmer 11)

Well to me, um, it's about uh, you know ... knowing where food has come from, knowing what's in it, and that it's safe I suppose ... making sure it's safe [Okay] Yeah, *me personally*, I'd say it was about it being safe, making sure what we're eating, you know where it's come from (Farmer 14)

It means being assured you've got sufficient food to feed people, that's how I think of it (Farmer 27's wife)

But food security is, to *my* mind, the number one thing quite frankly, with as I mentioned to you earlier, an increasing world situation, and also again, the fact that you know, they stopped making agricultural land a long time ago (Farmer 5)

It's the fact whether you, whether you can, um, get a reasonably economic source of food for the whole population and the weakness of importing it all is, that if there then becomes a world shortage, and your relying on imports, you're in the hands of the people who are producing and if there's a shortage, then the price might rise higher than you would be able to afford, so you need to maintain a reasonably prosperous local agriculture don't you, to make sure you're not held to ransom by importing things, *that's what I'd suggest, that's what I think of when I think of food security anyway* (Farmer 28)

Interestingly, whilst talking to Farmer 18, I opened up the food security question to his wife, who had contributed to earlier answers, which revealed two very different understandings of the term.

[My last question for you, and it's open to both of you, and it is what is your understanding of the term food security?] Food security ... having enough food for the people of this country to, you know, to be able to live with a decent amount of food available (Farmer 18)

Contrastingly, his wife added:

Well, when you said food security, I was thinking of a house wife, buying food in shops and supermarkets and that and then labelling and saying what's in it ... where it's coming from ... is essential ... that's what I think (Farmer 18's wife)

As demonstrated the term food security has different meanings to different people, stemming from the fact that food security discourse is relatively new having only “emerged as a key marker of UK food policy over *recent years*” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 41, emphasis added), as well as “farmers’ understandings being partially conditioned by their own farming situation” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 44). The majority of farmers defined food security in a fairly general and rudimentary, but nonetheless, correct way, that, in the same way as respondents in research by Fish *et al* (2013: 43), “mirror[ed] some of the different ways in which the term has been described in policy circles”. These farmers talked generally about the foundational issue of ensuring or guaranteeing food supplies, which they often attributed to the idea of population growth.

Well, just more mouths to feed and making sure we can do it, I suppose it’s just making sure everyone has enough food ... yeah you read it all the time, but I don’t know any more than that really (Farmer 17)

It’s about you know securing food supplies [...] food’s a lot more precious than that and people are beginning to realise, you know it’s precious ... and we are gonna run out [...] now there is food shortages worldwide (Farmer 23)

It means being assured you’ve got sufficient food to feed people, that’s how I think of it (Farmer 27’s wife)

We probably all enjoy it fantastic supply of food, we go to the supermarkets or wherever and we know there’s food gonna be there, we may not need to have that abundance of food supply, that we’ve got now, um, but we’d still be okay, there would be no problem, so we need to work out, um, we would need to work out what food we actually need in times of trouble ... we got an overabundance of food in this country, we all eat too much and we all throw away too much (Farmer 2)

Interestingly, Farmer 4 understood achieving food security as an imperative factor in preventing political unrest.

Well, I mean the, they are looking at the potential of, of famine for a start, I mean not, not immediate famine but long term, so that’s, that’s in their mind, where they are heading. And obviously, if you get hungry people, you get riots, as we’ve seen. My understanding of it anyway, is about producing enough food to make sure that doesn’t happen (Farmer 4)

Interestingly, one farmer recognised issues of food safety and traceability as distinct from food security, which further denotes how the term has only emerged as a key concept in UK food policy in recent times.

Food security, uh, well of course it means that we don't run out of food, we can source food, yeah [...] traceability, that's peripheral isn't it? You know, I have pigs, I *have* to secure wheat for them, so you know, that's the core of it (Farmer 16)

Interestingly, given the global nature of food security discourse and government belief that “attempting to pursue national food security in isolation from the global context is unlikely to be practicable, sustainable or financially rational” (PMSU, 2008: x), the majority of farmers defined food security as a problem of *national concern*, and emphasised the importance of self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on imports.

How we make sure we've got enough food *in this country*, in the future ... [...] it's about how we start planning for that, how we are going to feed *ourselves* (Farmer 20)

Food security ... having enough food *for the people of this country* to, you know, to be able to live with a decent amount of food available (Farmer 18)

It's ultimately about ensuring *we* have a good percentage of our food produced in *this country* (Farmer 2)

It would be the ability of the country to feed itself ... I mean there's no way that the country could feed itself with the food it can produce, you know in this country, we've gotta import exotic stuffs ... but at least try and maximise that (Farmer 12)

Maintain a reasonably prosperous local agriculture don't you, to make sure you're not held to ransom by importing things, *that's what I'd suggest, that's what I think of when I think of food security anyway* (Farmer 28)

Only a minority of farmers demonstrated a deeper understanding of the term, but those who did, were impressively attuned to the contours of the debate. As put forward in the introduction to this thesis, food security is conceptually very complicated and represents a confluence of many issues. Some farmers were appreciative of this complexity, and were able to situate food production goals amongst multiple criteria in their definition, including environmental threats, the increasing use of land for non-food purposes, and the declining availability of mineral inputs.

I think the main thing that comes to mind with food security, is the grain situation, um, you got your breads and all the other things that are connected to grain, I know meat's important too, but you see, I remember, I think it was probably not last year but the year before, reading a report whereby we were down to so many days um, stocks of wheat that were left within the world, which is frightening when you think about it. And you see now over this last summer you've had fires in America, you've had droughts in Russia, we've had a poor harvest here, and if you add the three, the three

together, it makes one wonder, [laughs] are we going to be alright from that point of view points to self. I know we aren't going to be in a situation where there's starvation. But food security is, to *my* mind, the number one thing quite frankly, with as I mentioned to you earlier, an increasing world situation, and also again, the fact that you know, they stopped making agricultural land a long time ago [...] And so much of it is going out with building and one thing and another and fuel, that it is bound to be the number one thing quite frankly. Predominantly [...] What I think one has got to be careful of, is um pauses it is the acres that produce the food, and we've got to maintain that in balance with the environmentalists that would like to see the acres transferred to a lower degree of production, maintaining birds and wildlife and trees and all the rest of it, that's fine, but once you start sort of giving the incentive in any sort of grant on acres and not on production then you tend to sort of look upon a descaling down of your food security (Farmer 5)

Food security ... it's basically about how we are going to secure enough food in the coming years as the world's population increases ... I appreciate it's more complicated than that, but in essence, we are going to have great difficulty feeding the growing population [Yeah] Particularly in a way that has little impact on the environment, see it's not as simple as upping production and getting on with it ... it's complicated [Yeah definitely] I was reading the other day ... about the production of however many hundred hectares of maize on ... on the Fens, yeah the Fens, up in Norfolk it would have been, it was ... it was to power homes ... I mean, are we going to have enough land for food production? [laughs] That concerns me ... [Yeah the food versus fuel debate] Yeah, I mean then the weather is probably a bigger concern, I mean we can't afford another year like the last 2 [Yeah] All these things ... and I think the science is there ... it's a case of embracing it or being allowed to use it [What do you mean, like GM?] Yeah, as controversial as it is [laughs] (Farmer 6)

6.2.3 The Resurgence of 'Proper' Farming: An Opportunity for the Next Generation

As well as the positivity associated with the economic prospects, farmers frequently referred to the prospect of the changing nature of the work required by those in the industry in the future. A number of farmers expressed their dissatisfaction with current 'post-productivist' nature of their work. The following excerpts depict this dissatisfaction common amongst the group.

I do see a little bit of disappointment from our generation of farmers that um ... the government sort of through my farming time, they used to give you grants for drains, drainage schemes, and um, tidying up areas, and now you drive around and you see fields that have got all the money spent in, growing trees [...] The incentives are there

not to grow anything (Farmer 1)

And wife later added:

Somebody in government wants to get a grip really and see what's happening, what has happened, how many acres ... well they must know it somewhere in the archive, is not being farmed, and if they want people to farm it, then tell them to farm it, instead of paying them per hectare to grow weeds, basically [Okay] As I say, I'm not anti-conservation, I love it and we love it, we love to encourage the birds and the butterflies and the poppies and everything else [Um] But it suits us ... because we are at that stage in our life, but for someone like our son, I mean paying him to let things go, it's ridiculous (Farmer 1's wife)

We are getting grants for conservation, for making ponds and cutting off the corners of trees ... which is great, but it contradicts what's happening, what's actually happening [Yeah ... definitely] It really saddens me (Farmer 23)

Similarly, Farmer 21 expressed how, his involvement in an environmental scheme has prevented him from doing 'proper farming'.

Can you believe we have got land that they are paying us not to grow stuff on? [laughs] [...] I mean, we've been in a scheme for a few years [...] so when that ends, we can basically go back to proper farming at the end of this year [...] for the last ten year, we've been paid ... well the field right there [...] that's done nothing for 12 months and I been paid £200 an acre to grow nothing on it ... [Yeah] Diabolical ... Bloody diabolical (Farmer 21)

It's mind boggling that they are taking land and the CAP now is still talking about 3 per cent set-aside (Farmer 28)

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1.1) and remains useful here, the emergence of post-productivist activities, such as set-aside, growing trees and general conservation activities, are largely incompatible with their habitus or disposition-to-act and their definition of what it is to be a 'good farmer', challenging their ingrained productivist self-image (Shucksmith, 1993). Although the idea of this simple transition from productivism to post-productivism has been heavily criticised, as demonstrated in the above dispirited narratives, "farmers' status, expressive enjoyment and even mental health are threatened" (Shucksmith and Hermann, 2002: 41) with palpable implications for the appeal of farming as an activity.

Although Ward (1996: 213), perhaps too forcefully in the absence of any empirical evidence surrounding the alleged 'crisis in succession', suggests "the changing role of agriculture in a 'post-

productivist' countryside" has caused "important changes in the ideology of 'family farming', reflected in a declining commitment to succession", there was evidence, in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes of this discontent and its influence on farmers' desire to pass on the farm.

[So my next question is do you think farming at the moment offers a better, same or worse opportunity for someone going into it today?] I think it's a lot worse an opportunity [...] farming's not all about being a farmer, you know growing stuff, producing stuff, it's about the paperwork and filling out all those forms ... there's no emphasis on producing anymore and that's why people want to farm [laughs] ... I'm not surprised if people aren't wanting to go into it as it is at the present moment (Farmer 9)

You know farming's changed, lots of things have changed, and probably not for the better, you know when I started, it was just about farming, but there's so much more to it, the paper work, the restrictions, the red tape, conservation and so on ... you can't *just* farm (Farmer 24)

However, many commentators are beginning to recognise that "productivism [...] is making somewhat of a comeback" (Burton and Wilson, 2012: 54). New-productivism (Lobley and Winter, 2009) or neo-productivism (Burton and Wilson, 2012) which refers to "an accumulative and intensive production ideology *within* a multifunctional regime" (Burton and Wilson, 2012: 56, emphasis added), is assuming its place at the forefront of the political agenda, where it is "being enthusiastically embraced by farmers and their advisors" (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 216). Interestingly, in the context of this theory, many farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes found solace in the potential resurgence of productivism. As Farmer 9 aptly stated, "it'll be good, you know, 'cause farmers will have to go back to being farmers again and not secretaries". This sentiment was common amongst the group.

It won't be very long until every last acre will be needed to be used for food production [...] and it's certainly going to put farmers back in the driving seat [...] it'll get farmers doing what they do best (Farmer 28)

At the moment, you're stuck between environmental legislation and red tape ... but economics will kick in and politicians will have to allow it ... get us producing again (Farmer 16)

Farmers want to be out farming don't they ... we do it 'cause we like being outside, we like working with the livestock and I think anything that brings that back can only be a good thing (Farmer 24)

To make a definite statement regarding the impact of this anticipated transformation of the nature of agriculture on the family farms' *commitment to succession*, would be futile, given that this research is underpinned by the belief that farm family behaviour is the product of a complex interaction between external factors and the internal dynamics of the farm itself. However, as evident in the ensuing quotes, the anticipated resurgence of what farmers often referred to as 'proper farming', attributable to the widely propagated increases in demand for food, is at least making succession a more desirable aspiration for farmers. Although situated in the most basic contours of the food security imperative, i.e. projected population growth and associated increases in demand for food, there was a *very clear* sense of positivity linked to this imperative, which serves to realign succession, which "has [long] been strongly rooted in agriculture's 'productivist' rationale" (Ward, 1996: 210) with its 'productivist roots'.

Farming has the potential to go back to actually being about the producing, you know, getting paid for what you produce ... which would be ... encouraging [What makes you say that?] Seeing things grow ... it's the most basic thing in the world, so it would be nice to be rewarded for it, again I mean (Farmer 3)

[So with regards to these demands, how do you see them panning out ... I mean what do you think it means for potential successors?] Yeah, it should be good [Okay, what makes you say that?] I really think it will, because farmers will be needed as producers again ... [Okay] Farmers will be wanted again, people are realising how important we are (Farmer 5)

At the moment, you look for income or revenue from doing environmental schemes, not production, but then again, we need food, we're needing more and more food ... and I do think it's changing and it's exciting for farmers really going forward (Farmer 12)

I think, farming is, or what is produced in farming is in increasing demand ... population increasing rapidly, you know, and the opinion is farming is going to be profitable, or you know, farming's going to be lucrative, and it's going to make any potential successor more sort of amenable to taking it on, so yeah it could well start encouraging them (Farmer 13)

Similarly linked to the food security imperative was the feeling that farmers are beginning to be valued as producers. Carruthers, Winter and Evans (2013: 4) recall how "by the 1970s and 1980s [...] as the full effects of post-War agricultural intensification emerged, public attitudes to farming became increasingly determined by its impacts on the environment, animal welfare, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) budget and food surpluses" and "as a result, farmers felt increasingly

marginalised”. This feeling of marginalisation has continued to be observed until quite recently; in 2005 Lobley and colleagues identified feelings of media and public criticism leading to “uneasiness with identifying one’s self as a farmer” (Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 29). One respondent in their study recognised a change in attitudes towards the farming profession over a period of time.

“Years ago everybody had quite a good feeling about farms, a good opinion about farmers, they would say, you know, you’d be working away and people would come past and they’d say ‘Well, I dunno, you might get that hay in before, you know, it’s gonna rain tonight, you know, you’d better get them bales up’. They really couldn’t give tuppence now, and what we do, we always, I always feel that you’re under suspicion” (Interview Respondent, Lobley *et al*, 2005a: 29).

However, during his talk at the 2009 Oxford Conference, journalist and writer, David Yelland suggested the era of bad press appears to have passed, and that farmers now enjoy “genuine affection in the hearts and minds of ordinary people” (Yelland, 2009: 4). Although Yelland recognised this change in media and public attitudes, supported by a number of recent opinion polls, such as Defra’s 2008 *Public attitudes to agriculture, the farmed landscape and natural environment* (Defra, 2010c) and Oxford Farming Conference Research conducted in the same year, *Understanding consumer perceptions’ of British Farmers* (IGD, 2009), he also suggested that farmers had not ‘caught up’ with their new standing, noting specifically, that farmers are still stuck in an obsolete mind-set, speaking amongst themselves, in what he described as a ‘lexicon of defeat’ (Farmers Guardian, 2009).

In the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, the *overwhelming* feeling is that farmers have ‘caught up’ with and are enjoying their new standing.

I think possibly the public may be, are happier with farmers, ‘cause they realise that they need farmers for ... food, they’ve realised where it’s coming from ... they’ve got to respect farmers I suppose (Farmer 15)

Yeah, I think there is a need for food security and as you say, the population is growing, so there’s could be a, well it’s really already started ... a resurgence in the value of food, and farming (Farmer 2)

The majority of general public are beginning to realise where their food comes from [Yes, more of a connection to it] Absolutely ... and are ready to have a say into how that food is produced you know (Farmer 5)

I suppose we were very very well regarded a few years ago, but then that all changes, we were accused of all sorts, feather-bedding you know [Okay] But I think now that

food is getting scarce [Yeah] And British food is reliable [Yeah] I mean you got another case now of [Not knowing] Yeah, this horse meat in burgers [Yeah not knowing what's in them] I mean people are beginning to value us a bit more because of it (Farmer 3)

It's picking up but I think it's more 'cause of public perception [Okay] People starting to think about where we're going to get our food from [Okay] [...] now, people are perhaps beginning to appreciate that what, what the food that produced in this country is produced to a very very high standard [...] but I think now, farming is certainly getting a better press now, yes certainly I think it is (Farmer 28)

The publicity has been more positive really ... stuff like Countryfile has been positive towards farming, and it's quite a realistic picture of farming [Yeah] I would have said it's definitely getting a better public perception (Farmer 13)

Compared to the time when people didn't want to know farmers ... it's all about importing cheap food ... but now people generally feel farmers are needed [And what's sort of sparked that need then?] People just ... they're just thinking about where their food is coming from as the population is increasing ... [...] there's going to be a shortage of food ... it has been forecast [...] I think there was a time when you were worried about saying you were a farmer (Farmer 18)

His wife continued:

Yeah don't say you're a farmer [laughs] (Farmer 18's wife)

To which he added:

But yeah, I feel that's changing ... I feel that people feel like there's a place for farmers (Farmer 18)

Whilst it has been recognised for several years now that “farmers, as producers of food and fuel in a dangerous world, are being valued once again” (Andersons Agricultural Consultants, 2007, cited in Lobley and Winter, 2009: 2), Yelland (2009) remarked on the disparity between farmers *being* valued and *feeling* valued. Notably, as demonstrated by the abundance of positive excerpts, above, farmers in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes *have* ‘caught up’ with their new standing, and are embracing it; the value of farmers in terms of global food security appears to have filtered through to the farm level.

Critically, this feeling of value furthers this sense of farming ‘getting good’ and appeared to further ameliorate the appeal of passing on the farm to a next generation.

It makes sense that if things are getting better for farmers, then more people are going to want to be farmers [And when you say better, do you mean financially, or you've talked a bit about public perception, is it more that, or ?] Yeah I think more the way farmers are seen by the public I think ... [Yeah] I'm not sure financially it'll ever get too much better but yeah, what people think is important (Farmer 24)

There were of course a minority of farmers who continued to feel undervalued.

You know the public thinking, you know especially with subsidies, they think farmers are heavily subsidised and after the money and it's awash with subsidies and inefficiencies and that I hate (Farmer 23)

I'd say a generation ago, I'd say there was more empathy really and that's 'cause people understood the value of food, people a generation ago, my father, you know, they'd lived through periods of time when food was scarce (Farmer 16)

In the case of Farmer 16, this feeling of not being valued, compared to a generation ago, stemmed from a series of misinformed public 'interventions'. He continued:

We do get some trouble, we get anonymous, um ... we're on the road, and if people walk past and see something they're not pleased with, the first thing they do is phone up Defra, or RSPCA, so every, every, more than once a year, we will get an anonymous report of something going wrong and something they don't like and that's become more and more common, so you know, those people obviously don't love me, and that's probably, it wouldn't be farmers, not local farmers, it would tend to be people from the village who walk past with the dog, and it's nothing personal against me, thinking 'oh god, those poor animals, they need a bit more straw' ... *they don't understand properly* ... the last time it happened which was in December, they don't mention it to me, they phone up state Veterinary service, so they phoned me up and said they're weren't going to come out because it was too regular ... 'cause every time they come out, it's a waste of time, because I'm not doing anything wrong (Farmer 16)

As Carruthers, Winter and Evans (2013: 4) note although public perception of farming is generally positive, "the public has a very modest knowledge and understanding of farming" and, as in this case, it is the source of Farmer 16's disparagement. Critically, it is not to say that the public are not interested in farming, nor do they not value it, but as evident in this case, they do not understand it.

Interestingly, Farmer 16 poignantly reflects how fundamentally, what farmers ‘do’ has not and is unlikely to change and this aroused some ‘suspicion’ of the permanency of ‘unfounded’ changes in public perception of the industry.

We weren’t criminals 10 years ago, and we’re not saints now, so it’s people’s perceptions of us and it’s not any different in reality ... it doesn’t matter, you know, I still go out and feed the pigs, you know, the technical side changes, but in your heart ... if I went back a hundred years and spoke to a farmer, we would just click like that ... sick animals, you know the hay’s spoiled, wheel’s fallen off the car, the weather, you know, it’s all the same, and if you met a farmer on the other side of the world, or say Thailand, or whatever, it’s just the same, the fundamentals are the same (Farmer 16)

Later in the interview, I asked Farmer 16 how he felt about farming being described as ‘back in fashion’.

Yeah, superficially, but the media is fickle, so I don’t get to hung up on it [...] farming might be in fashion for a couple of years, but all you need is one farmer to do something bad [Yeah] And then you’re right at the bottom of the pile again [...] suddenly every farmer is a criminal [Yeah] But it’s lovely at the moment, but you don’t want to get too hung up on flattery, because it comes and goes (Farmer 16)

This sentiment was shared by Farmer 29, who suggested:

You know people are interested in farming at the moment [...] but the trouble with fashions is they come and go (Farmer 29)

6.3 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has explored farmers’ experiences of entry into farming with a particular focus on what made them become farmers. Whilst the analysis has confirmed longstanding belief of farming as a hereditary occupation by identifying entry of the eldest son via an *Established Family Farm*, as the most common route into farming, it has also identified how the entry of younger, traditionally ‘non-eligible’ children, to what it terms *Extension* and *Separate Family Farms*, although less frequent, were no less the product of family farm ideals. In line with the wider literature, it demonstrated that ‘successor creation’ is a multifaceted, complex and yet subtle process, with those who succeeded to *Established Family Farms* identified in line with wider cultural norms and expectations, and then socialised into ‘choosing’ (or left only to choose) to fulfil their role as the next link in the chain. Similarly, those from *Newly Established Family Farms* were also inculcated by family farm ideals, developing an attachment to the occupation and/or the area as they grew up,

but in the absence of the ability to succeed to the home farm, they sought an alternative. Identification of *Extension* and *Separate Family Farms* as ‘non-traditional’ (by-)products of the family farm and the ideal of continuity widens the traditional understanding of how and why succession can shape farm occupancy that has dominated the farm succession literature, and reveals the true extent of hereditary nature of farming. Furthermore, highlighting the (less visible) connections these *Newly Established Family Farms* have to their farming families and family farms, potentially affords a more accurate understanding of their behaviour, which, just like those who succeeded to the home farm in the traditional sense, has potential to be predicated on (and even limited by) familial attachments, traditions and so on. In line with wider understanding of farming as a hereditary occupation, only a small number of farmers were entirely *New Entrants*. Although small in number, their identification is important to understanding the occupation of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

Having confirmed the importance of ‘family’ in the majority of farmers’ entry into farming, the chapter continued by exploring the importance of identifying a next generation to these farmers. It appeared that, in contrast to concern over the desirability of passing on the family farm recently observed in the literature, identifying a next generation remained a central objective for all farmers, irrespective of their own entry into or connection to farming, although findings suggested the importance was more intense amongst those from *Established Family Farms*, who situated their hopes of identification amongst the work of and memories of their own predecessors. Whilst in line with recently documented concern, analysis revealed many farmers had experienced recent financial struggle, or had to make significant personal sacrifices to avoid financial difficulty, in significant contrast to recent suggestion in the literature, analysis indicated farmers were notably positive about what a future in farming could offer their potential successors. Interestingly, given the context of this research, much of this positivity was naturally framed in terms of many of the key components of the food security agenda, which suggested how the global context is being interpreted by farmers and is having an influence at the individual farm level; a dimension of the global imperative which Fish *et al* (2013) have suggested has been previously neglected.

Having naturally emerged as a key facet in farmers’ apparent positivity towards the industry and more specifically, (where applicable) towards their potential successors’ futures in the industry, farmers’ understanding of the term food security was explored. Farmers defined the term in many different ways, reflecting the many dimensions of the term and the multifaceted nature of the challenge. Analysis revealed that true understanding of the overarching discourse had been masked by a simple failure to associate it with the term ‘food security’, which, as demonstrated in their wider narratives, nearly all farmers had at least a basic understanding of. More broadly, this mismatch in understanding has many implications for future policy wording and/or communication

with the farming community on the topic of food security, and these implications are discussed in more detail in the conclusion chapter (Chapter 9).

Whilst this chapter has provided an understanding of how and why succession has shaped land occupancy in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes and added to our understanding how and why farms pass through families, it has also provided a necessary context from which to now explore contemporary succession issues, as intergenerational transfer is not, temporally-speaking, a ‘standalone’ process, but as demonstrated, is strongly rooted in, and ultimately shaped by the past. Simultaneously, this chapter has evinced a realignment of the desirability of identifying a next generation with its inherent and unwavering importance, which it attributes to the emergence of the food security agenda and the opportunities farmers anticipate this will offer the(ir) next generation.

Although evidently important and increasingly desirable, succession, or more specifically the succession status of farms, i.e. the availability of next generation farmers, remains a cause for (albeit colloquial) concern in both the UK and internationally, and is of growing importance as demands on the farming industry increase exponentially. Furthermore, having identified a potential successor, the way in which managerial control is transferred between generations can itself be problematic with implications for the eventual successor’s ability to manage the farm, the long term performance and even survival of the business. These issues are explored in the context of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes in Chapter 7.

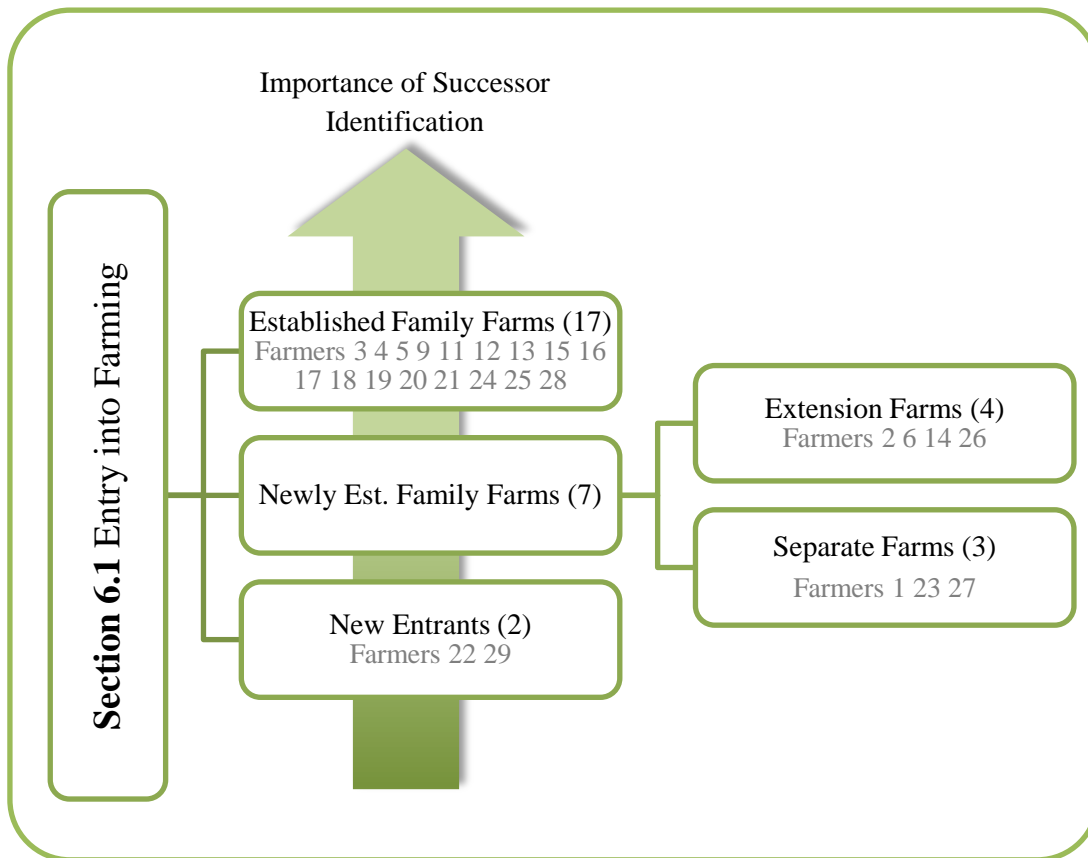


Figure 6.4 Diagrammatic summary of Section 6.1 'Entry into Farming'

Chapter Seven: Succession Status and the Transfer of Managerial Control in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes

7.0 Introduction

“I started to work for my father, then with my father; now he works for me” (Hutson, 1987: 221)

This chapter continues to present and discuss qualitative findings from farmer interviews and also potential successor interviews, focusing on successor identification and the process by which managerial control is being transferred. Transfer of managerial control represents a critical phase for the family farm with tangible impacts for the individual family business, and more broadly the sustainability of family farming systems. With this in mind, the chapter firstly explores the succession status of participating farms, unpacks the nuances of the varying levels of farmer confidence and considers the reasons for these differences. Next it explores the impact of successor identification on the farm business – the so called ‘succession effect’ – before examining the impact the potential successors themselves are having on the business – the ‘successor effect’. Whilst in line with previous research, a number of potential successors were clearly ascending a ‘ladder of increasing responsibility’, this was not applicable for an equal number of potential successors. The progression of the different groups is explored in the context of the wider demands on the industry, and reasons for the differences are offered.

7.1 Succession Status

The preceding discussion has demonstrated the continued belief in farming as something that should be handed from generation to generation, as well as the emergent understanding of the likely prospects of the industry, in the context of the food security agenda. Farmer 17 pertinently summarised the confluence of the importance and desirability of intergenerational farm transfer:

They want to be so many more per cent self-sufficient, so really looking at it, they can’t really go wrong, can they? [Yeah] Families want to see the farm passed on, they always have done, even when it’s been bad, but if it’s getting good, which they say it will, then that’s a bonus (Farmer 17)

Although there is little more than anecdotal evidence supporting this trend, the preceding decade has seen the propagation of the notion that British farming has endured a worrying ‘crisis in succession’. Despite the numerical crisis being ardently dismissed by a throng of empirical evidence (Lobley *et al*, 2002; Lobley *et al*, 2005a), pointing instead to the “ongoing persistence and tenacity of family farmers” (Lobley, 2010: 9), given the importance of a next generation of farmers

to the delivery of food security, farm succession status remains a salient issue.

A significant number of farmers (10) interviewed were confident in identifying a next generation (see Figure 7.3 p.264 for a diagrammatic summary of succession status according to farmers).

[Do you consider yourself to have a next generation for the farm here?] Definitely, 100 per cent, I know that's all he's ever going to do (Farmer 15)

[Do you consider yourself to have a next generation?] Yes, yes I think we are confident our son and daughter-in-law taking it on (Farmer 24)

[Do you consider yourself to have a successor for the farm?] Yeah, yes we do (Farmer 18)

[Would you consider yourself to have a successor?] Yes (Farmer 19)

[The farm, will it have a next generation, a successor?] Yes, yes (Farmer 25)

[My next question would be, do you have a successor or successors?] Yes, my son is going to succeed to the farm (Farmer 4)

[And it was passed through to, uh your Dad and then you ... or?] Then it passed to me, and now it's Jeremy's turn [Okay and that's your son?] Yeah he is, so yeah he'll be fourth generation (Farmer 9)

Similarly frequent (10) was a feeling of, perhaps what is best described as 'realistic hopefulness' (see Figure 7.3 p.264). For these farmers, succession is looking likely and is, as denoted in several of the following narratives, their aim, but they remain realistic that there is, inevitably, a chance that it may not occur. Just as those confident in succession occurring, *all* farmers in this group have identified a *prospective successor*, in that they have young adult or adult offspring involved in the farm who are (actively) moving towards managerial control. Yet what sets these farmers apart from those confident in intergenerational farm transfer occurring is their sensitivity to the fact plans could change and thus they do not exude the confidence, characteristic of the aforementioned group, indicated by a subtle but nonetheless telling difference in language. Answers from these farmers tended to be vaguer, and were frequently interspersed with 'nervous laughter', reflecting their anxiety that succession might not materialise. Emphasis is added to the following quotes to illustrate the difference.

[Do you have a successor in mind?] *Hopefully* [laughter] it will be my son, Stephen (Farmer 5)

[Okay, so we've kind of touched on this, but do you consider that you have a next generation here?] Well yeah ... *that's the plan*, certainly (Farmer 12)

[So do you sort of consider, you know that your daughter's gonna continue in farming?] *Well yeah, I hope so* (Farmer 20)

Well, we got two daughters, one obviously wants to go farming, but that don't necessarily mean that, I mean she could go off and get married, I don't know, there's still a bit of a question mark, but her loves milking cows, she's been offered a job where she does, on her gap year and I sort of told her, at the moment, she just as well take it, because it's good to go and work for somebody else, 'cause her can always come back then ... but she might also marry a bank manager and not have to do anything else, for the rest of her days [...] as we've said, it's looking likely my daughter will take over ... but then again, the other one is going out with a farmer's son, so you know, it could even pass to them. It's like a lot of things in farming people, with the young ones, they go out and do something else, so um, she has gone to a local agricultural college, so there's every possibility, there will be a successor here and it'll stay in the family (Farmer 17)

[Okay, and thinking about the farm now, and the future of the farm, um, do you think, do you consider yourself to have a next generation in the farm? I mean a successor or perhaps successors?] Yes, yes, *it's looking that way* (Farmer 23)

There was a patent awareness amongst farmers in this group that identification of a prospective successor, even if they are moving towards the managerial control of the farm, may not guarantee succession will occur. This further justifies the need for the distinction between 'the successor' and 'the potential successor' as actors, as proposed in the earlier framework. Particularly relevant, given this distinction, one farmer claimed:

Yes, I've got a [potential] successor, but whether that succession takes place is up in the air [laughter] (Farmer 2)

On a methodological note, this group of farmers for whom succession is likely, but yet remain realistic, have only emerged as a result of the freedom offered by the semi-structured interview and subsequent qualitative analysis. Previous investigations into farm succession status which have sought to categorise respondents into narrow status groups (such as those using the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey), have lost this detail, by conflating these farmers with those confident in succession occurring. Many of which, reported whether farmers simply had or had not identified a successor. Even in more elaborate analysis of succession status, where Potter and Lobley (1996a; 1996b) describe 5 status categories, including 'Successor on Farm', 'Successor not on Farm',

‘Uncertain’, ‘Too Early’ and ‘Definitely No’, the nuances of the above accounts may have been lost; nuances that contribute to a more realistic understanding of the succession status of farms.

This sensitivity to choice appears to be a response to the ‘different world we now live in’ attributable to the wider societal shift from a ‘society of duty’ to a ‘market place of opportunity’, introduced in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.2). Although with specific reference to his work with children, Riley (2009: 255) similarly observed a clear “desire for a modern life” including “a greater social life outside farming” amongst participants. Many farmers in this group situated their doubt in the context of wider societal changes meaning potential successors have different expectations from life and are often coming into farming with an array of life-experiences. Farmer 2, who, as immediately above, expressed his concern over whether the succession would materialise continued:

It’s just different, I think it’s just a different world anyway, I think expectations are so much different as well aren’t they, from what you’d get from life, like people see more, like my son’s already travelled and things like that, I don’t know, but when I left school, your expectations were different, or less I suppose, then what a lot of teenagers are now, aren’t they? [I suppose the role of things like Facebook, you know, you can see what other people are doing, you are not a million miles from Exeter here, or like you can fly to wherever ...] Yeah certainly, there’s all these opportunities tempting people like my son away (Farmer 2)

Farmer 14 held a similar stance.

[Do you consider yourself to have a next generation on the farm here?] Yes, yes, that’s what we’re certainly aiming for [Okay] [...] But you know it’s got to be financially possible, he’s gotta be able to make a reasonable amount ... enable him to have a good standard of living, have a reasonable lifestyle (Farmer 14)

Incidentally, in a later section of the interview, Farmer 23 spoke of the likely difficulty experienced by his sons.

My sons, they are always mixing with people that have more time off, have weekends, you know and it is difficult for them [...] it really is seven days a week ... 365 days a year ... and yes, it always has been, but because we are such a small percentage of the population, mixing with other people ... their lifestyle, the wider influences (Farmer 23)

The concerns of Farmers 2, 14 and 23 demonstrated here are in stark contrast to the lack of choice, characteristic of so many farmers’ experiences, documented in the previous discussion (Section

6.1.1). As documented in the previous section, the dominant feeling was that of ‘not really knowing any different’.

This ‘different world’ farmers described reflects wider patterns of rural social change, particularly counterurbanisation (see Woods, 2005). Ward and Lowe (1994) observed significant increases in Devon’s population during the 1970s and 1980s, with an influx of newcomers changing the social fabric of many of its rural villages – farmers’ children were now attending schools alongside their new neighbours with quite different values and lifestyles, elucidating the stance of many of the farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

There were a number of instances (5) where it was ‘too early to tell’ because the farmer had young children, or simply their children had not decided. In one case, the potential successor, although keen, had suffered a period of ill-health and her ability to succeed was largely unknown at the time of the interview.

It’s possible that one of them might be interested in taking it over (Farmer 29)

The youngest one, he’s 11, he’s the most likely to carry it on farming here, but I think we mustn’t get carried away with the idea [...] it’s early days on the succession front (Farmer 16)

It’s certainly possible, but my son, he’s finishing his A-levels at the moment, and he has plans to go travelling so we’ve not really talked about it much ... he’s always been quite hands on with the farm but it’s never been an obvious choice for him, he’s quite academic so I think it could be a while before we have that conversation to be honest (Farmer 6)

Although many farmers with young children were unable to comment on the likelihood of one of their children succeeding, interestingly Farmer 15 was confident his son, aged *only 12 year old*, would succeed to the farm:

[Do you consider yourself to have a next generation for the farm here?] Definitely, 100 per cent, I know that’s all he’s ever gonna do (Farmer 15)

Refreshingly, given the range of anecdotal evidence and intense speculation regarding the ‘succession crisis’, only one farmer had ruled succession out completely. Interestingly, given widespread belief in the field that the prospect of farming as a career choice had become “less attractive to farm children” (Ward, 1996: 211), in the case of Farmer 22, her failure to identify a successor had not been because her son simply was not interested, but was primarily attributable to financial limitations restricting him.

[Do you consider yourself to have a successor or a next generation?] I don't ... I can't see how he could afford to do it (Farmer 22)

Out of the 20 *confident* and *hopeful* farmers, 3 had identified their daughter as their potential successor. This is a significant finding given that suggestion of a female successor amongst the farmers' generation had been so contentious (and even openly laughed at – see Section 6.1.1.1) and suggests, as Silvasti (2012: 21) adduced in 2012, “the very strict, traditional script of gender division in succession seems to be slowly crumbling” and that “it seems that today a daughter can be more often a possible option for the continuity of the farm”. Potential Successor 24 commented more widely on this change.

[Were you the only possible successor?] Well, it was just me and two sisters [Okay and they ... none of them expressed an interest in farming?] No, not at all, no [Why do you think that was the case?] whether they [...] just expected that's what'll happen ... but they did hate going out and doing it [Yeah] That's different now, girls are more interested now (Potential Successor 24)

7.2 The Succession Effect

As highlighted in the literature review, in the context of what Lobley *et al* (2010) describe as ‘the challenges of the future’, we can undoubtedly “derive benefit from the so-called ‘succession effect’” (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 60). The ‘succession effect’ refers simply to the impact the expectation of succession has on farm business development and was particularly evident in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. The case of Farmer 5, who until a significant and recent change in his son's career plans did not have a potential successor, provides a particularly stark illustration of the succession effect.

[So since, you know, identifying your son as the potential successor, have you made any changes to the farm, have you sort of thought, maybe you've thought he's coming back, maybe we should invest in something or ... you know?] I had run things down a little bit in the amount of stock I was keeping, so I was farming all sheep, no cattle, now he has, he's invested in, into some Devon, he's interested in Devon cattle. So he's got a small heard of Devons which is *his* particular enterprise and of course that opens up a whole other picture of the various things that one needs crush you need to put them through ... so that's meant some investment for us that we wouldn't have done if he wasn't coming back, you know, I would've just run it down but we had a reason for building it up I reckon, you see (Farmer 5)

Both ‘confident’ and ‘realistically-hopeful’ farmers were able to identify at least one change they had made since identifying their potential successor. Even Farmer 16, for whom it was too early to

tell whether any of his young children would eventually want to or be able to succeed to the farm, noted how the possibility of having a next generation had informed his actions.

[Okay and this is maybe not massively relevant to you because your children are still a bit young, but since having your children, do you think in terms of the farm, do you think differently, have you done anything with the idea in mind, you know, one of your kids could possibly take it on at some point?] Well, yeah, I think everything you do, you do it for, you do it for the ... it sounds pompous saying for the greater good, but you do, you do it with a view that whoever comes after you will appreciate what you do [...] you know what I'm doing here now, we're putting an Aga in here now, I've cleared this all out, what mother put in, and I do with a view of whoever comes after that, will enjoy and appreciate what we did, so it's just, it's so long term (Farmer 16)

In line with other research (Hutson, 1987; Potter and Lobley, 1992a; 1992b; 1996a; 1996b), a number of confident and hopeful farmers had acquired additional land (see Figure 7.3 p.264).

[Since your son said he wanted to farm, did you sort of make any changes to the business, you know did you invest in any land or anything?] Not immediately, 'cause as I say, we bought this farm, and the neighbouring farms, but until the land comes on the market, you can't buy 'em can you [No] [...] We'd wanted to do it for a while but yeah [Okay] So we bought, that was about 95 acres I think ... it joined our land, so it made sense really (Farmer 28)

[And since he's come onto the farm, have you made any changes, like invested in land or changed the way you work or anything?] Well yes, we've bought a bit of land, um [The idea behind that being there was two of you able to work out on the farm?] Yeah, I think so, it's allowed us to farm more [...] [So, would you attribute investments to having a successor?] *Yeah, suppose I wanted to ensure there was enough work for us both* (Farmer 19)

Furthermore, a number of farmers had increased stocking levels. Some of the literature surrounding this phenomenon suggests that a farmer's decision to acquire additional land and increase stock levels is part of the long term 'plan' or an investment for the (successor's) future. For example, Potter and Lobley (1996: 319) suggest "a farmer with a successor has a 'generational stake' in his successor which provides a constant incentive for expansion and forward planning" and, that "farmers with successors (or with a high expectation of succession) may have stronger bequest motives than those without" (320).

However, as demonstrated below, participants' motivations seemed far more short-term and pragmatic and more about accommodating successors in the 'here and now', rather than as a result of the *expectation* of the succession occurring and preparing for the future. For participants, acquisition of land was exclusively sought to accommodate the interests' of potential successors and keep them active and stimulated. It was ultimately envisioned to make their continuity on the farm an attractive option. Farmers frequently recalled taking on sometimes significant acreages or increasing numbers of stock substantially to ensure potential successors were sufficiently 'kept busy' or 'had enough work'.

[In terms of any investment, um, have you, you know rented any extra land, since she's being back on board, or bought anything or ... ?] Yeah I've taken on another 100 acres since she's been home [Was that, would you say it was directly linked to her being around?] Well, *'cause I told her um, for me to be, for it to be viable for her to come back here and work full-time, I told her I had to get a certain number of stock levels, accommodate her [...]* and we got cows as well, which, you know I've done that on her behalf, 'cause I've done that for her, I aint kept cows for years, well I bought her nearly 70 cows since she's been working 'ere (Farmer 20)

[Okay so since the time then, that your son presented himself as a possible or likely successor to the farm then ... um and was working there ... did you make any changes to the business as a result of him coming into the business?] I took on the tenancies of nearby farms ... to increase the acreage ... when he came home, we were farming 400 acres ... we had nearly 200 of our own and we had 200 additional rented acres ... *to make sure he kept busy* (Farmer 18)

His wife added:

We pushed the cow numbers up, didn't we? We had a lot of young stock as well (Farmer 18's wife)

The acquisition of land and increase in numbers of stock with the intention of 'keeping potential successors busy' reflects the wider rural social change and the associated 'mixing' or dilution of agrarian values and lifestyles discussed above. As previously demonstrated, a number of farmers were attuned to these changes and appreciate the changing expectations, experiences and opportunities open to their potential successors. It appears that farmers' decision to acquire additional land or increase stock levels is a response to these wider social changes; in essence, such investment ensures the potential successor is active and engaged and are therefore less likely to be tempted by the other opportunities available to them, outside of farming. A particularly good example of this is of Farmer 2 and his potential successor. His son graduated from University with

a non-agricultural degree and has spent some time travelling. Employable outside agriculture, and having seen and experienced life outside of farming, his father aptly continues:

There's all these opportunities tempting people like my son away (Farmer 2)

Acquisition of land and increasing stock numbers accommodates and occupies the potential successor, 'leading them away from the temptation' of other opportunities and thus helping to ensure succession will eventually occur. This proposal follows Fennell's (1981) assumption that succession is most assured where the successor is actually working on the farm alongside the farmer.

In a number of instances (6), the type of stock taken on was with the successor's interests in mind. Interestingly, Farmer 18's wife recalled the number of farmer's sons leaving farming in the aftermath of FMD, and her husband's response to embolden their son's interest in continuing on the farm was to ask him what stock *he* wanted to go into.

We pushed the cow numbers up ... didn't we? We had a lot of young stock as well ... we didn't have sheep, we had um, we had beef and the dairy, but when foot and mouth put pay to that, my son was 25, we were in our mid-fifties and my husband said to him, are you leaving, 'cause we'd seen so many farms around where the farmer's sons had said 'right I'm getting out' ... so our son said 'no, I'm not going, I'm staying' ... so my husband said 'right, what do *you* want to do?' and that's how the beef and sheep came about (Farmer 18)

Similarly, Farmer 14 had increased the cow herd with his grandson's interests in mind.

[So since um, your Grandson has expressed an interest in farming, is there anything you've done on the farm to kind of accommodate him working here or ...?] Well yeah, we have built up the cows a bit more ... [Aha] Tried to go from 60, up to 90 [Okay] To accommodate a little bit more towards what he wanted to do, what he's interested in (Farmer 14)

Although Farmer 2 had not *yet* decreased the sheep flock in favour of cattle, he similarly suggested how his son's disinterest in sheep could eventually mean changes in the future.

My son's not keen on sheep, and I can see that, the sheep flock could be decreasing in years to come, 'cause they can be quite hard work, if he doesn't wanna keep sheep, and for an older person, well as I get older, it's not easy keeping sheep, so it could eventually be just cattle on the farm, but again, I'd have to wait and see on that one (Farmer 2)

Parenthetically, as Hutson (1987) astutely concludes, as well as providing an incentive to expand a potential successor can *also* provide the means to do so.

I suppose we took on the land nearby since our son was home, we might not have done that maybe, [...] [Okay] But that is something I suppose we actually have done since he has come home, we've rented some more land away from here [...] [Okay, yeah] I suppose having him here, it's another pair of hands isn't it? (Farmer 2)

In contrast to the wealth of changes and advancements confident and hopeful farmers had made, Farmer 22, who had failed to identify a potential successor, described a very different scenario.

[And what type of farming do you do here?] We grow wheat reed for thatching [Okay yeah] And um now and um I have a few suckler cows so we get the rotation um because we only leave the corn in about 3 or sometimes it's 4, but usually it is 3 years and then just have new lay all the time [Okay so quite a mix] Yeah [So] But having said that, this year um we've actually cut down [Okay] Um, so we still plough it, we've got the option of bundling the reed at the end [Okay] Um, if we've got the time um, so we've just found it too much [And how many people are working um sort of full time on the farm?] Neither of us, we both work part time [Okay, that's fine] Just a bit when it's necessary (Farmer 22)

7.3 The Successor Effect

Concomitantly, the 'successor effect' or the impact of the potential successors themselves on the farm business was also particularly evident in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Many farmers commented generally on the way in which their potential successor had encouraged them to keep up with technological developments or different stock or breeds.

He might say he wants a new bit of equipment to do something, and we generally say 'no, we can't afford it' ... but yeah, I suppose my son, well he encourages us to keep abreast with the new technology and stuff (Farmer 11)

The way Farmer 25 recalled how his potential successor (albeit belligerently) 'encourages' him to keep up with new machinery and equipment and describes him as having 'that spark and ideas', was particularly interesting and supports the long recognised, if only anecdotal, notion that young farmers tend to be most innovative (Potter and Loble, 1996a).

[Okay and since, if we talk about your eldest [...] since he's come into farming, you know come back to the farm, are there any things that you do differently, that maybe he's encouraged you to do ... you know, come home with an idea or ...] Doing red and white Holsteins now instead of black and white ... that's something that we've

done different [...] so instead of seeing black and white cows, you see red and white ones starting to appear [...] I've always liked Ayrshires um and I didn't realise you could get red and white Holsteins quite like we've got and he looked it up and said to me about them [Oh okay] And that's probably the main change [...] You know and machinery and that, I usually get a bollocking [...] So he's got that spark and the ideas and stuff (Farmer 25)

Whilst it is believed that "a progressively stronger successor effect is likely to be observed as the successor climbs the 'succession ladder' and assumes more managerial responsibilities" (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 289), the impact of education on the strength of the successor effect, was largely evident in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

A large number of farmers reporting changes and improvements attributed them to their potential successor's participation in agricultural courses and the ideas and approaches they've learnt about and practiced.

And yeah some odd bits of machinery to make life easier for us all, that he's suggested, recommended ... he did a ... he went to a local agricultural college and part of his course, he worked at different farms so yeah he's been able to recommend stuff that they've been doing (Farmer 14)

Yeah we bought the bail trough and several things ... 'cause my son went to a local agricultural college and he did several things, learnt things and we have altered several things, haven't we? (Farmer 12)

He used to go to a local agricultural college [...] he went there for a few years [...] I wasn't that bothered about him going to start, but it was good for him, good for the farm, you know? He brought back all these ideas (Farmer 3)

Farmer 17 commented more generally on how what his daughter was learning during her agricultural course was 'breathing new life' into the business.

She goes to a local agricultural college [...] there's certain things that, um, that I see my daughter learning now, and it breathes in a bit more life, you know it stops it getting stale then ... so yeah, whereas I would struggle to work something out, or I'd have t' go and ask somebody, she's got it [laughs] (Farmer 17)

Interestingly, although Farmer 20's potential successor was part way through a Business Management course (as opposed to an agricultural course), she was also particularly active in terms of her input to the business.

I mean she does all the selling now, I don't do nothing with that side of things, I aint got much interest in the markets to be honest with you, she does a lot of it, you know, she sells all the cattle when she takes 'em to market, she's quite good at that so (Farmer 20)

He later attributed her aptitude to the course she was doing.

I aint got a clue, but she's doing her business stuff and what have you, she's bringing that into farming and I think it's marvellous ... you know she's a bright kid, she could do anything she wants (Farmer 20)

The input of potential successors who have attended what I will describe as 'agriculturally relevant' courses¹⁸, matches Weston's (1977: 241) idealist approach to the transfer of farm management control. Weston asserts "the son, by going to university, brings back new ideas into the business" but he asks "need he read agriculture?". Instead he suggests, "would not agricultural economics, business management, estate management or agricultural marketing be a wiser choice?" (Weston, 1977: 241), claiming that the wider aspects of such courses would give potential successors a better perspective and academic training would foster an openness to expert advice.

Potential Successor 20 also described the benefits of the course:

This is my last year of doing a diploma [...] and I'm doing that at college [And is that sort of with the idea or the aim of incorporating those skills into the farm business?] I think it's kind of opened up my eyes to what the future holds for me and what I need to change now, to make the future benefit me, if that makes sense (Potential Successor 20)

Where potential successors had worked on other farms as part of agricultural courses, their experiences appeared to have a particularly notable influence on the trajectory of the home farm.

[That's fine ... okay, so since um, your grandson has expressed an interest in farming, is there anything you've done on the farm to kind of accommodate him working here or ...?] And yeah some odd bits of machinery to make life easier for us all, that my grandson's suggested, recommended ... he did a ... he went to local agricultural college and part of his course, he worked at different farms so yeah he's been able to recommend stuff that they've been doing (Farmer 14)

My son, you see, then he came back and then, 'cause he changed the system 'cause he started, the farm he worked on [...] had ewes, so he suddenly started breeding sheep

¹⁸ 'Agriculturally Relevant' courses are courses not directly related to agricultural but are highly applicable to the wider running of the farming business, such as business management, estate and land management, marketing and accountancy

and uh you know it gradually built up from there really, steadily each year, it's just kind of progressed (Farmer 28)

[Okay, that makes sense. So, you said that your son went to agricultural college, and became incorporated in the farm. Since him working here, has the business changed at all?] Well, the way we do things has altered slightly, but no major changes [...] Nothing massive ... obviously when he came back with some ideas from his time on other farms, which we've brought in along the way ... (Farmer 4)

This experience was also advocated by Weston (1977) in his ideal model of the transfer of managerial control. He suggests "that the son who is to succeed would [...] have a year or two on another progressive farm" where he would "gain experience and perhaps shed a little youthful exuberance" (Weston, 1977: 241).

As previously stated, it has long been believed that "a progressively stronger successor effect is likely to be observed as the successor climbs the 'succession ladder'" (Potter and Lobley, 1996a: 289). The ladder of increasing responsibility was first identified by Commins and Kelleher (1973) and has long been identified and utilised to describe the succession process. Later, Errington (1998: 8) suggested how "a growing body of evidence points to the existence of a 'ladder' of responsibility which the successor will climb, gradually becoming more and more involved in the management of the farm". Errington (1998: 10) outlines five distinct rungs of the ladder, including the fifth rung that "lies significantly higher than all the others" which "is the decision when to pay bills" or what he refers to as controlling the 'purse strings'.

Whilst the ladder of increasing responsibility was applicable for a large number of potential successors in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, further analysis revealed a distinct cohort for whom the succession ladder is not a realistic representation of how managerial control is being transferred between the generations. The following analysis explores the characteristics of these distinct cohorts in more detail.

7.4 The Transfer of Managerial Control

The following analysis examines the process of the transfer of managerial control between the generations; as a two generational process and in the interests of creating an accurate and balanced understanding how managerial control is being transferred, the following section draws on the 14 farms where interviews were carried out with *both* the incumbent farmer and the potential successor (see Figure 7.3 p.264 for a diagrammatic representation of the typology and the distribution of potential successors amongst the different cohorts). Although interviews were carried out with both the farmer and the potential successor on Farm 13, the following discussion excludes the experiences of Farmer 13 and Potential Successor 13, whose long-term succession

plans and levels of delegation/involvement had been put on hold for several months prior to the interview because of the potential successors' ongoing health difficulties.

7.4.1 Conservative Potential Successors

A clear cohort of potential successors confirmed the existence of this model in that financial decisions were the last responsibility to be transferred to them (6). This group of potential successors had gradually progressed up a clearly delineated ladder of increasing responsibility. Potential Successor 18 provided the most systematic account of his ascension of the succession ladder.

[You've obviously had some formal agricultural training, um ... but how have you ... you're obviously heavily involved in the farm, how did you and your Dad work things? I mean did he train you up, how did he train you up?] Left school in the early 90s, 91 I think, came straight back ... just working for my Dad, bit like any other workman really ... I was doing the hard work [laughs] and just gradually ended up doing more and more ... I think as the years went by Dad trusted me more and more with various bits and pieces ... I was always quite good at the negotiating side of things so Dad let me get involved in that at quite an early age really ... So yeah, what was I saying ... it was quite a gradual process (Potential Successor 18)

But despite heavy involvement in the day-to-day running of the farm, in line with traditional thought, these potential successors had very limited or non-existent input into the financial and long-term investment decisions. Potential Successor 18 continued:

There's a few things that Mum and Dad, Mum in particular, are still in charge of, like the money ... and I don't know what goes on ... *so we're not there yet* (Potential Successor 18)

Particularly telling in terms of the tangibility of the ladder was the way Potential Successor 18 added 'we're not *there* yet', as it depicts that for these potential successors, the rungs on the ladder are very real ends, and thus the succession ladder continues to be a very applicable model in these instances.

[Who would you say has the ultimate, where the buck stops ... you know the final decision?] Dad still has really, yeah [Is that more because he's still doing the finances or ...] Yes, he's got the handle on how things are looking and yeah so he's in charge really ... has the final decision [laughs] [The purse strings] Yeah [laughs] (Potential Successor 4)

[You mentioned that your Dad is still dealing with the paperwork side of things ...]
Yeah, it's still his business (Potential Successor 5)

[Who do you consider to be in charge with the books and the money then?] Well Mum, she oversees the finances, the money in and out [And what about, well who would make a big decision to say buy some more cows in, or buy some new machinery or ...?] I guess when it comes to spending money or making any big decisions ... Dad would probably do that, for the moment, yeah (Potential Successor 24)

More generally, potential successors in this group were met by the most parental resistance or difficulty in their ascent of the ladder. Their quest for increasing levels of responsibility is best understood as a non-explicit struggle against their parents. Schwass (2005: 47) also observes this intergenerational-relationship in family firms more generally, and describes it as “that of opponents”, a kind of ‘*you versus me*’, which as evident here, he suggests, “implies a ‘*win-lose*’ situation”. Although there was no evidence of ‘fallings out’ or ‘heated disputes’ between the generations, there was an underlying feeling of difficulty and frustration. Potential Successor 5 recalled the struggle he had carrying out simple tasks on the farm without his father’s help and approval.

It took quite a while for Dad and me to find how it was going to work. To start with, he was here all the time, I couldn’t do anything, I couldn’t just do something, I couldn’t just inject a ewe without telling him, and then he’d come over and he’d want to do it [...] And anyway, we’ve gradually worked that out, he’s certainly let go of a lot of the work (Potential Successor 5)

Similarly, Potential Successor 18 suggested how his mother had found relinquishing her involvement in the farm challenging.

Mother still isn’t happy about you [their daughter-in-law] going out and her coming in and looking after the child ... even though she doesn’t really do anything out there ... she just likes to think, or to be able to tell everyone that she’s still out on the farm (Potential Successor 18)

Despite the associated difficulty, potential successors in this group had all ascended through the different rungs of increasing responsibility and now all assumed a similar position, poised and ready at the final rung. The transfer of the finances represents a clear *final* rung for these potential successors which they were striving towards, further reinforcing the actuality of the succession ladder.

I guess when it comes to spending money or making any big decisions ... Dad would probably do that, *for the moment* (Potential Successor 24)

[And who would make ... so you've said your parents try to be involved still, who would make a decision such as ... like to buy some more land or something similar?] *At the moment* it would be them, it's their business not mine (Potential Successor 18)

[And um, is there anything, he's still doing ... the typical example is like the farmer would continue to do the finances and the books, is he still doing that kind of thing?] Yeah, yeah he does (Potential Successor 3)

[At the moment do you get any sort of the big decisions, like when to buy a new tractor or when to buy or sell land or anything?] No, not at all ... nothing ... [Okay] Not at all [And are you hoping to edge into that kind of thing?] Yes, hopefully, but Dad wants me to work here a few more years first (Potential Successor 19)

But, in line with Hastings' (1984) observation of the cheque-book being the 'last bastion of father's control', that affords the father "an ideal monitoring and control mechanism", it was clear that transfer of the 'purse strings' was something that (although talked about) was not materialising in reality.

[You mentioned that your Dad is still dealing with the paperwork side of things ...] Yeah, it's still his business [...] We are *supposed* to be doing that now [So it's quite a salient issue then?] Yes [laughs] [...] (Potential Successor 5)

Similarly, Potential Successor 4 suggested how his Dad was 'quite keen to keep a handle on things for as long as he can'.

Things have been gradually sort of changed over, when we've bought additional land perhaps, it's gone into my name or joint names here, just to spread it across ... but I think Dad's quite keen to keep a handle on things for as long as he can, so although we're certainly getting there ... as I said, new land might go into my name or joint names, but obviously it's um ... yeah it's difficult ... I don't think it's going to happen overnight (Potential Successor 4)

This evidence supports longstanding belief that responsibility for deciding when to pay bills is "all too frequently *beyond* the top rung to which the successor can aspire during his father's lifetime" (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 215).

“Danger lies in the unprepared son. The son’s greatest concerns on final takeover are for the financial activities and decisions usually retained by the father” (Hastings, 1984: 199)

Although potential successors in this group did not express any concern over their eventual management capabilities themselves, their exclusion from and therefore inexperience of higher-rung management decisions as explicated in the above narratives, means “there is a grave danger that the successor will be insufficiently prepared to deal with the financial aspects of management when his father eventually retires or dies” (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 219). Whilst a wealth of commentators have, for many decades, warned of the danger of the unprepared successor (Weston, 1977; Hastings, 1984; Gasson and Errington, 1993; Errington, 2002), it is important to note, that despite the prevalence of this concern within the farm succession literature, there is *no empirical evidence* to support this notion.

However, elsewhere in the more general family business literature, researchers and practitioners “have consistently found a positive relationship between successor development and a successful transfer of responsibilities” (Caykoylu, 2013: 28). Notably, Morris *et al* (1997: 390) identified “preparation level of heirs, that is, the extent to which they have the requisite business skills, managerial capabilities, knowledge of company operations, and attitudinal predispositions to run the business”, as a major factor in achieving effective transfer of managerial control. Their work with second- and third- generation family business owners found that preparation of heirs, particularly, “the extent to which heirs work their way up through the ranks” of the family business, positively affected the ‘post-transition performance’ (Morris *et al*, 1997: 398). Although factors Morris *et al* used to measure business performance, specifically, sales, profits and cash flow, are perhaps *not* representative of ‘desirable farm performance’ *per se* (measures could include farm productivity or capital investment for example), the relationship broadly suggests a positive relationship between potential successors’ level of preparation and, the post-succession performance of the farm. Similarly, in his research with 63 family business CEOs, Goldberg (1996) demonstrated how post-succession performance of successors who had received a significant amount of ‘on the job training’ was better than those who received little or none at all.

Based on evidence from the general family business research, the exclusion of potential successors from a number of ‘higher rung’ responsibilities and tasks can have a detrimental impact on the post-transition performance of the farm business. Multiplied up, this lack of experience represents a tangible threat to the sustainability of the family farm, and more widely, the next generation of farmers’ ability to respond to the challenges of farming for security. As Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 45) suggest how, when “progression towards becoming a knowledgeable farmer is frustrated through a lack of delegation and [...] failure to be exposed to the vital knowledge necessary to comprehend

the inner workings of the farm [...] could pose a threat to the sustainability of the farm” (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008: 45).

Whilst general family business research suggests farmers’ unwillingness to delegate certain final rung tasks *is likely* to impact on farm successors’ ability and eventual success, as suggested above, there is no empirical evidence from the family farm business field to support this trend and despite obvious similarities between family businesses and family farm businesses, farming occupies a unique position, guided by a distinct set of value systems. Therefore, to confidently understand the impact of different types of transfer on long-term farm business performance and sustainability, longitudinal research focusing on the family farm business is needed. This understanding is of particular significance given the importance of a “thriving and productive agriculture sector” to the delivery of food security objectives (Defra, 2008: 28).

Critically, if we understand control over the finances as the last responsibility to be transferred and as something that *enables* potential successors to take managerial control of the farm, then farmers’ reluctance to relinquish control of the finances becomes comprehensible. This understanding means the more general reasons for farmers wanting to delay succession can be used to explain why ascending to this final rung in the farmer’s lifetime is regarded as so difficult, if not ‘impossible’ (Errington and Tranter, 1992: 121), for the potential successor. For example, Weston (1977: 239) lists several possible reasons for a father delaying succession, including fear of mental idleness, fear for his own financial security and fear of a loss of purpose in life. Interestingly, Barclay *et al* (2005: 10) note where “there is a strong attachment to the farm as a place, particularly where a farm has been within the same family for more than a single generation” which was true of all the farms in this group, who were a minimum 2nd generation farmers, “there can be a grieving process associated with the transition into retirement – grief for the loss of place, identity, status and community”. They continue to suggest that “such attitudes can lead farmers to the delay or postponement of retirement for as long as possible” (Barclay *et al*, 2005: 10). Although farmers in this group did not explicitly express such fears, there was some evidence that farmers were putting off succession decisions or were reluctant to firm up what they typically described as ‘rough ideas’, as elicited in the following narratives.

Delayed Succession (and Estate) Planning

Although the proposed conceptual framework (Section 4.3) insists that the transfer of the ownership of the farm business assets does not necessarily automatically reassign managerial control, it anticipated that this may typically be the case. As anticipated, for potential successors in this group, responsibility of the finances was foreseen as a result of the formal handover of the farm business assets. Unfortunately, as elicited in the following extracts, although they had given the formal handover some consideration, farmers lacked follow-through on their plans.

For example, Farmer 5, aged 80, when asked about his succession plans, recalled how he and his family were in the process of formally 'sorting out' the succession.

We are in the process of it actually, of moving over, I can't say any more than that at the moment really, you know [...] But as regards to anything concrete we haven't got to that bit yet (Farmer 5)

The way he claimed to 'not be able to say any more than that at the moment' as well as the absence of any 'concrete' plans, at his stage in life, supports the suggestion that he had perhaps put off planning for succession. His potential successor, in his early fifties, concurred with this suggestion, describing how his Dad had put such thoughts 'on the back burner':

They keep saying things like we don't think we should be running a business at 80 and we want to hand it over, so we keep having sort of family meetings, the four of us, Mum, Dad, me and my sister, where we sit around, and my sister and I say you know, you need to do this, you need to do that, consult a solicitor, and think about what you want to do, and we've discussed it to an extent um, well we've agreed stuff to an extent [...] That was this February that we had this discussion, Mum and Dad said they want to hand over the business, Dad doesn't want to be a sleeping partner, he doesn't want to include me in the business, he wants to hand it over 'lock stock and barrel' ... but at the moment he's still ... it's all still in my parent's name and you know, I'm happy for them to be involved, we have talked about the handover ... but when it does happen, he'll want to hand it all over ... *but* Dad seems to have, well that was February and what are we now, November tomorrow, so I think Dad's put it on the back burner for the moment (Potential Successor 5)

Commins and Kelleher (1973: 82) observed a similar ambivalence amongst farmers interviewed, concluding that "planning for the disposal of the farm is just postponed from year to year". Likewise, Farmer 3 was at a similar stage in his succession planning.

[How did you go about planning, you know passing the farm over, how did you go about that, did you all sort of sit down one day or did it just kind of happen or ...?] We took him in as a partner [...] [Okay um and then you just kind of continued working in a partnership?] Still partners [...] although as I say, I'm doing less and less ... but that's as far as things have gone ... in terms of the planning side, but we have a rough idea (Farmer 3)

His potential successor also concurred. Interestingly, Potential Successor 3's answer highlights how the process of planning was mainly driven by his *father's* level of desire to be involved and

little else. This is resonant of Gamble *et al*'s (1995) observation that farmers typically facilitated the transfer process on their own, in isolation from other family members.

[And do you have a plan in place, or any dates in mind, like anything planned or written down?] Not really, we have a rough idea but it's mainly about how much Dad feels like doing [laughs] (Potential Successor 3)

Farmers' narratives shared many characteristics with Goeller's (2012: 153) story of the story of 68 year old farmer's son, Joe, whose 90 year old father never planned for succession that "did not have a very happy ending", resulting in the farm being sold to the highest bidder after the father's death. The unwillingness to plan for succession is disconcerting given that, as summarised by Leach (2011: 146) succession planning "is often a decisive factor determining whether the business survives or fails". Furthermore, evidence from the family business literature widely suggests "the absence of a succession plan can cause serious management problems, even leading to a business failure" (Harris *et al*, 2012: 4).

For example, in their seminal study of family business failure, File and Prince (1996) make the distinction between succession planning, which they define as 'the management task of transitioning leadership' and estate planning 'the task of transitioning financial assets and managing tax obligation'. With this in mind, the top 4 reasons given by heirs from failed businesses were clear attributions to inadequate estate planning, including "the founder did not have an adequate estate plan in place" (overall mean rating of 9.64 on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 as 'extremely important'), "the founder did not adequately prepare for the transfer of the business" (overall mean of 9.49), "need to raise funds to pay estate taxes" (overall mean of 9.38), "the founder's financial advisors performed inadequately" (overall mean of 8.85). Contrastingly, inadequate succession planning was ranked significantly lower; "the founder did not have an adequate succession plan in place" was ranked 10th (overall mean of 5.53) and "I was not properly prepared for taking over the business" was ranked 12th (overall mean of 4.92). In summary, File and Prince (1996: 180) suggest "heirs of failed enterprises are far more likely to blame inadequate financial and tax planning than they are poor leadership planning" (File and Prince, 1996: 180), this is particularly worrying given the failure of farmers in this group to 'follow through' on their estate planning.

In addition, recent research by Harris *et al* (2012) has demonstrated how engagement with succession planning is positively related to family business performance. For example, return on equity (ROE) and operating profit margin (OPM) were higher where family succession plans were present – benefits that are failing to materialise in this cohort.

This discussion exposes a further lack of evidence from the family farm business field and highlights the need for longitudinal research to fully explicate the implications of failing to plan for succession and equally the benefits of doing so in the context of the industry.

Going Online

Although this group was largely defined by farmers' reluctance to relinquish control, the introduction of online financial systems was encouraging potential successor's involvement in some aspects of the finances. Delegation of this activity to the potential successor, or often the potential successor's wife, was critically, not through choice, but was a result of the farmer's computer illiteracy. Although it is important to stress this group were largely characterised by the farmer's reluctance to relinquish control, it is imperative to recognise that the introduction of online systems were *forcing* this dynamic to alter.

[Who is kind of in charge of the paperwork and the finances and that side of things?] I am, well I was but I've started handing it all over, that side [...] they all want it done on the computer now, don't they? [Yeah, okay] I don't know anything about computers [Okay [...]] So he's taken charge of some of it now ... him and his accountant (Farmer 3)

[With regards to the books and the finances and the buying and the selling, is that, does that come under your responsibilities?] Most of it, yeah. Well, yeah quite a lot of it I'm still in charge of. I'm not computer literate so that's, I hand it over to them to do that businesses (Farmer 4)

[Who is in charge of the finances then? Who would make a big decision like to buy more land or a new bit of machinery ...] Well it would ultimately be my son's idea ... but yeah me and my wife, we still do that side of things, although it's going to my son and his wife more and more ... the online stuff (Farmer 18)

Whilst at present potential successor involvement was limited to a small number of specific online tasks, the increasing computerisation of farm management anticipated in years to come, has potential to radically reorder the rungs of the ladder and force the delegation of 'higher rung', finance-related tasks at earlier stages.

Appreciation and Sensitivity

A key characteristic of farmer-potential successor relationships in this group is potential successors' appreciation of the importance of the farmer's continued involvement in the farm to the farmers.

He's certainly let go of a lot of the work ... he leaves it all to me now and is very happy to do so but I don't underestimate how hard it was for him to do that, so I, in turn, I still involve him, in terms of any major plans, I mean we've been talking this morning, in terms of the number of stock that we've got at this time of year (Potential Successor 5)

In line with Commins and Kelleher's (1973: 82) suggestion that "farmers who have invested their whole careers in farming [...] probably find it more difficult to part with the ownership or managerial control of the farm", Potential Successor 18's wife appreciated her parents-in-law's difficulty in beginning to relinquish control of the farm:

They'd spent all the money and all their effort building up the farm [...] And a few people had asked them 'oh, are you retiring, you're moving next door?' [...] The 'R' word did not go down well [...] I suppose it must be difficult to just suddenly be side-lined into childcare

Potential successors in this group clearly appreciated that for their fathers, "retirement [...] is not just making land available for productive use or giving up his customary source of income" but also means "a change in his established relationships with his neighbours and relatives, a change in the way these people evaluate or treat him, thus affecting his own feel of well-being, a change in the pattern of his activities, interests and time, and a change in the meaning which his surroundings have for him" (Commins, 1973: 45).

Whilst this appreciation has preserved many familial relationships (there was little evidence of disputes or fallings out), it further compounds the potential successors' inability to ascend beyond the final rung of the ladder, by leaving them with little desire to push the issue of succession at the expense of their parents' contentedness. For example, Potential Successor 3 was happy to think his father's control over the finances sufficed to keep him involved, giving him little impetus to change the division of managerial control.

At the moment it's Dad's doing and it keeps him involved, so I let him get on with it (Potential Successor 3)

Perhaps more worryingly, as Schwass (2005: 39) asserts, "the successor's [...] lack of business leadership competence [as evidenced above] normally only represents the tip of the iceberg and is a symptom not the root cause" of the associated post-succession family business failure. It is the emotionally rooted desire to satisfy their fathers, as evident in this group, that, as described by Schwass (2005), is actually the 'root cause' of post-succession family business failure.

“In 1981, the outgoing CEO, Reginald Jones, advised his successor on the best approach for the future: ‘Blow it up’. The name of the successor was Jack Welch, who then changed the fundamental strategies of his predecessor and led GE to outstanding success, in turn, advised his successor, Jefferey Immelt, to again, ‘blow it up’” (Schwass, 2005: 39)

Although only colloquially, it has long been accepted that the next generation bring new ideas and an innovative approach to the business (Lobley, 2010), yet, as a result of what Schwass terms *emotionally driven family relationships*, this sensitivity to the incumbents’ feelings and desires, meant potential successors were careful to accommodate their suggestions when it came to farm business decisions.

For example, with reference to his plan to sell his ewes, Potential Successor 5 acknowledged that if his father made an alternative proposal he would have wanted to take it on board, for fear of excluding him.

I don't underestimate how hard it was for him to do that, so I, in turn, I still involve him, in terms of any major plans, I mean we've been talking this morning, in terms of the number of stock that we've got at this time of year [...] And I've outlined what I want to do, in terms of selling some ewes etc etc because it is his business [...] And I think if he thought there were other ways, and he thought to maybe keep those ewes and sell in the Spring, he would have said and I'd have taken it on-board ... I don't want to exclude him ... we'd have been able to discuss it (Potential Successor 5)

Not only is this willingness to accommodate the farmer stifling and restricting potential successor ideas *during* the transfer of managerial control, there is strong suggestion from the wider family business literature that it can continue post-succession, and even beyond the life of the current farmer. Using the example of the post-succession failure of the Swiss-based André Trading Group, which filed for bankruptcy in 2001, shortly after Henri André formally became chairman, Schwass explicates the underlying reason for the business’ failure:

“I could not address some of the real and fundamental problems of the business, because this would have meant overturning key decisions taken by the previous leaders to whom I am particularly close: my father and my uncle. For my father, restructuring would have meant abandoning everything that he and his father had built up” (Grant and Roberts, 2001 cited in Schwass, 2005: 39)

Schwaass (2005: 39) concludes, in the case of the failed André trading group, “emotionally driven family relationships restricted the individual” and “prevented these necessary decisions from being

made”; restrictions that are evidently manifest amongst these potential successors. It is the effect of these emotionally driven family relationships, post-succession, that represents an overlooked threat to the family farm’s propensity to respond and adjust to farming for food security.

In Schwass’ example of the Andre Trading group, even *post-succession*, when he was chairman, Henri Andre felt unable to overturn key decisions his father and uncle had made, because of his close relationship with them, despite knowing making those changes, could have rectified ‘some of the real and fundamental problems of the business’. Although, Potential Successor 18 explicitly (and somewhat comfortingly) contradicts this proposal (as below), claiming that his father’s absence due to a recent illness, had actually allowed him to think of ‘taking the farm down different lines’, the evident desire to satisfy their fathers, prevalent in this group (particularly Potential Successors 3 and 5), resonant of Henri Andre, nonetheless raises valid concerns about these potential successors’ propensity to take the business forward, changing it as necessary. It also highlights the absence of, and subsequent need for, longitudinal research to understand the impact of *emotionally driven family relationships* on post-farm succession decision making.

It's funny though, with Dad being away, what was he away for, a week or ten days ... with Dad not being there, I can see things, you know, taking the farm down different lines (Potential Successor 18)

It's opened your eyes a bit, to different options, hasn't it? (Potential Successor 18's wife)

The apparent willingness of the potential successors in this group to consider (to some extent) the wishes and ideas of the incumbent is identified as detrimental to post-succession performance in the wider family business research. Specifically, Morris *et al* (1997: 399) reported a “failure to find a relationship between the nature of the transition and post-transition performance” and suggest “*some* level of conflict or strife is a prerequisite for the transition to have a significant impact on performance”, concluding that “some degree of conflict appears desirable” (Morris *et al*, 1997: 399). Similarly, Dyck *et al* (2002: 159) found “the greater the similarity between the skill sets and managerial styles of incumbent and successor, the less likely it is that superior organizational performance will result”. Although these examples (Morris *et al*, 1997 and Dyck *et al*, 2002) are from the wider family business research and thus raise issues with the measure of business ‘performance’, they broadly assert that the emotionally restrictive relationship characteristic of farmers and potential successors in this group, could limit eventual successors’ ability to adopt and introduce *new* and best practice.

7.4.2 Progressive Potential Successors

“I’ve seen the business come on and progress, definitely progress since I’ve been working here” (Potential Successor 20)

Whilst this distinct pattern of increasing responsibility recognised by so many commentators, was relevant to many farms in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, analysis revealed the emergence of a discrete group of potential successors for whom Errington’s model was no longer applicable.

Potential successors in this group were significantly younger than their counterparts in the previous group, aged between just 21 and 28 years old, compared to 36-51.

Potential successors had all returned to their home farm on completion of a range of agricultural and ‘agriculturally relevant’ courses at a range of Further and Higher Education institutions. In contrast to the aforementioned group, they had a remarkably high level of input into the management of their home farm, many of whom had *significant* input into the finances and associated areas. Rather than a linear progression through levels of increasing responsibility these potential successors have, with a surprising level support and encouragement from the current farmer(s), been quickly submersed in and genuinely incorporated into, a wide range of aspects of running the farm, including, most notably, the financial decisions.

Perhaps the most significant difference in their experience of the transfer of managerial control was **the absence of a ladder of increasing responsibility** and the way in which these potential successors were moving towards full-managerial control of the farm. Unlike the *Conservative Potential Successors* who ascended quite a clearly defined ladder of increasing responsibility, there was no such pattern for these *Progressive Potential Successors*, who, along with their corresponding farmers, described a genuine involvement and contribution to, *all* aspects of farm management. Rather than starting at the bottom rung of the metaphorical ladder and working their way up, potential successors in this group have, on their return to the farm, simultaneously (as opposed to consecutively), become genuinely incorporated into, with varying amounts of responsibility, *all* aspects of farm management, ranging from the more ‘everyday’ to the executive.

Their input into, and sometimes significant degree of responsibility for, many of the **financial aspects of the business**, is a particularly striking characteristic of this group; firstly, because potential successors in the previous group were so obviously excluded from financial aspects, and secondly, because these aspects of farm management have traditionally been regarded as ‘off limits’ until the potential successor was typically over 40 years old or even beyond what the successor can aspire to during his father’s life time (Gasson and Errington, 1993).

For example, one of the youngest potential successors in the group, spoke of how she was completely in charge of dealing with sales representatives, her father corroborated her suggestion.

I deal mostly with the reps and stuff now, so he trusts me with it (Potential Successor 20)

She does all the selling now, I don't do nothing with that side of things [...] she sells all the cattle when she takes 'em to market (Farmer 20)

Although, with specific reference to the farm's finances, Potential Successor 20 recognised that "it's his money and his business", she also recognised her instrumental role in some key recent purchasing decisions.

[And who sort of, who, where does the final decision, who does the final decision lie with? Um, is that kind of Dad?] In terms of buying something? [Yeah] It always *was* Dad, every single time it always *was* Dad, but with me doing my bits at college and stuff, it has influenced him a little bit, like this year, it's, it's not a lot of money but it's a lot of money to us, like sheep prices, like the price from one person was £180 and from someone else was £206, no, £260, so I decided to go with the people that were cheaper, and Dad kinda like respected my decision, I was kind of like, 'cause the money that we were saving was a lot at the time of year (Potential Successor 20)

A genuine sense of equality between the farmer and the potential successor characterises farmer-potential successor relationships in this group, with many of the potential successors reporting having opportunity for genuine input into the business.

[Okay and if there was a big decision to be made, say I don't know, um, say some land had come up nearby, how would you decide to go forward with that? [...] What would your involvement be in it?] Yeah, it would be a team decision, yeah ... we'd all sit down together, yeah (Potential Successor 12)

Although, Potential Successor 23 suggested it was his mother who was chiefly in charge of the financial administration for the farm, he described how his father had specifically designed strategic meetings to give him and his brother opportunity to have input and to understand the position of the business – elements of management that seem to remain 'off limits' for *Conservative Potential Successors*.

[And who's in charge of the books and the money?] Mum trained to be an accountant [Oh that's handy] Yes, very handy to be around [Yeah] So she does all the accounts and then we do monthly breakdowns of the finance expenditures and again that all comes up in our meetings and then she handles all that, all the book work and stuff ...

but she's 56, so she is, well it's nice to not have her doing the manual work anymore [And do you feel that gives you the opportunity to you know, voice any changes that need to be made or ... I mean, do you get the opportunity to have an input on you know, what you buy etc?] Yeah definitely ... that's exactly what the meetings are for ... it's exactly that and I think that's why Graham has set it up that way ... it seems quite formal, you know we are a family ... it uh ... but it gives us the space to make sure we all get chance to ... yeah chance to have input (Potential Successor 23)

The difference between these *Progressive Potential Successors* and *Conservative Potential Successors* is not limited to the level of their involvement, at the higher or even highest rungs of the ladder, although there is evidence that potential successors in this group are working at these levels, but is the *nature of this involvement*. Rather than working *for* the farmer, potential successors in this group are genuinely influential and instrumental actors in terms of the management of the farm business. As Farmer 20 suggests, his potential successor's involvement has 'made a big difference to him' in terms of the running of the farm:

Well, she's very good, she's costing everything now, which opens my eyes, she, you know she can tell you herself, exactly what the lambs have made and what the cattle have averaged, you know, which is quite interesting [...] and she's quite a bright kid, she costs a lot of stuff, she's into buying a lot of the stuff that we use, she's on the farm trying to get the best deal, *which makes a big difference to me* (Farmer 20)

The exchange between Potential Successor 20 and her father which she describes below, serves to elucidate the nature of said involvement; the potential successor is not just learning from the farmer, but as she described, she felt the farmer was learning from her.

He's started to question things too, so he's learning from me which is nice, like we've just had our rental agreement re-done, and I think, he was a bit optimistic in taking the land on, and I don't know if we really really did need it, but Dad said take it on for another year and try it, and he agreed we'd review it next year ... 'cause he promised to fence it and he never did, I'm a bit like you stick to your morals or you don't (Potential Successor 20)

Potential successors in this group frequently expressed how they felt their input was genuinely valued and that ideas and suggestions were genuinely listened to and often adopted.

[How much, if you were to want to buy a new piece of machinery or have an idea, that you know, to change the business, would you be able to kind of do that, you know ...] Well, Dad would have to agree, but I think he'd listen to me [...] I don't think he'd

ignore what I said if I said we should buy this or do this or whatever (Potential Successor 2)

Potential Successor 17 recalled how her work on another local farm gave her ideas that she was able to suggest to her Dad, which she recalled he had been surprisingly open to.

[Okay of course, yeah, um, so what do you think you'll take from working at this other farm then, in, in September?] Yeah, I think it's good to work for other people, um, you just, you get used to how other people do things, and you can take things, and possibly not steal their ideas but you know, use their ideas, you can think 'oh that's a really good idea, why don't we do that at home?', the farm I work on is a dairy farm and there are differences but um, yeah I think it's interesting, there are different ways of feeding calves or just certain ideas or if they do things a certain way, so you could even try it or suggest it and Dad might be like 'oh no that's not gonna work' ... [And how have you found you know, suggesting ideas to your Dad?] Yeah he's reasonably open to ideas, yeah he listens to me ... he doesn't fully trust what I bring home from college, ideas and that, but if I suggest something I've learnt on the other farm, then he is more kinda open to it, I do have to push it a little bit, you know [laughs] but he definitely takes my suggestions on board ... I think he's got the idea in his head now that 'cause I'll probably be farming here in the future, taking it on, and he needs to include me in that kind of thing (Potential Successor 17)

Given the absence of a hierarchical ascent through a consecutive list of tasks or activities of increasing responsibility, and the resultant irrelevance of Errington's (2002)/Errington and Lobley's (2002) succession ladder to this emergent group, the following *Succession Matrix* is proposed as a better way of understanding the succession experiences of this emergent group (Figure 7.1). The matrix does not rank or prioritise tasks or activities according to level of responsibility, but instead denotes how the potential successor enjoys genuine involvement in, and some level of responsibility for *all* tasks 'across the board' from the start; involvement and responsibility which increases (at different speeds) over time.

Task or Activity (Errington and Tranter, 1992: 121)							
		Decide type/level of feed/spray etc. used, supervise staff at work	Plan day-to-day work, input into timing of activities, machinery, work methods	Decide when to sell crops and stock, purchase machinery, staffing	Negotiate sales of crop and stock	Involvement in large capital projects, negotiate loans and finance	Decisions regarding the finances, bills etc.
'Level of Responsibility' traditionally associated with task >							
Pot. Successor Responsibility for	< Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 7.1 The succession matrix

Strikingly, one farmer in this group was particularly keen to ‘get rid of’ the higher rung responsibilities and pass them onto his Grandson.

[Okay ... and who’s kind of in charge of the books the financial side of things?] Granddad at the moment [Okay] But, he probably said to you, he’s trying to pass that job onto me, but I haven’t ... but yeah he’s still doing it at the moment (Potential Successor 14)

[Okay ... and what’s your involvement at the moment then?] I’m still doing the books, although I’m trying to get rid of the job ... but I don’t seem to get much luck [Do you mean pass it to your Grandson?] Yeah that’s right, yeah ... get him properly involved (Farmer 14)

The progressive route these potential successors are following has fostered both their confidence and ability.

[Okay, so you said your Dad will leave you to it, so you, you can run all aspects of the farm?] Yeah, I’m pretty confident (Potential Successor 2)

I’m ambitious ... I would like to do a lot of different things, I’ve got lots of things planned (Potential Succession 14)

In their work with family businesses, Morris *et al* (1997: 398) identified high levels of heir preparation, including “the extent to which heirs work their way up through the ranks” as a key factor in post-transition business performance. In the absence of longitudinal monitoring of *farming* potential successors, measuring the impact of the levels of involvement of potential successors on their post-transition competence and farm trajectory/performance, Morris *et al*’s (1997) findings suggest that, given the extent of their involvement in various tasks and activities, potential

successors in this group are *likely* to be ‘safe hands’ for the delivery of food security objectives. However, longitudinal empirical work is needed to confirm and develop this understanding in the context of the family farm.

7.4.3 Reasons For This Difference

In order to explain *why* these differences in progressiveness exist between the two cohorts, we have to look to the wider societal context.

From a ‘Society of Duty’ to a ‘Market Place of Opportunity’: The Impact of Societal Change

As introduced in Chapter 4, a fundamental transmission has occurred in contemporary Western society since World War II, “brought on by wide-ranging historical transition from ‘classic modernity’ to a ‘transformed modernity’” (Gullestad, 1997: 215), or what sociologists such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1994) refer to as ‘late modernity’ or ‘reflexive modernization’ (see Section 4.2). Emerging in the 1970s and particularly evident from the 1980s (Gullestad, 1997), the transition to transformed or late modernity was marked by “a change of emphasis from discipline to expressivity – to ‘finding oneself’ and creating one’s identity” (Gullestad, 1997: 215) and “more freedom and fewer constraints on individual lives” (Villa, 1999: 329). Increasingly, the individual is forced to construct their own life, and encouraged to believe they can do what they want to do. Owing to this shift, Villa (1999: 328) suggests “farmers’ life modes and life courses are changing and challenged within the overall process of modernization”. Specifically, members of farm families have experienced a shift in emphasis from ‘family and farm thinking’ (Brandth and Overrein, 2013) to autonomy and individuality. These broad societal changes from a ‘society of duty’ to a ‘market place of opportunity’, particularly visible from the 1980s onwards, represent a key source of difference for participating potential successors and a typology is offered (Figure 7.2) as a means of classifying potential successors’ experiences.

‘Older’ Potential Successors

For *Older Potential Successors*, born in the 1960s and 1970s, before the broad societal changes described above took hold, their upbringing would likely have been predicated on communal meanings and ascribed roles, where the family as a whole, took precedence over the individual (Brandth and Overrein, 2013). More specifically, within the farming context, the continuity and survival of the farm would have been more important than their rights as an individual (Silvasti, 2012) and as was patently evident amongst the farmers interviewed (discussed in Section 6.1) eligible children were simply born and raised to take over the farm. Villa (1999: 339) observed this emphasis amongst older generation farmers she interviewed, suggesting “farmers in the previous generations were subordinated to both family and farm obligations; the oldest were ‘born to be farmers’, while the youngest felt they had several opportunities to choose between”.

Correspondingly, she attributes this difference to “the individual freedom and reflexivity found among young Norwegians in general” (Villa, 1999: 339). Brandth and Overrein’s (2013) term *apprenticeship fathering* is particularly useful in denoting the way *Older Potential Successors* were brought up. They used the term to describe the way older generation farmers, defined as farmers who became fathers in the 1960s and 1970s, raised their sons *to become farmers* (compared to younger generation farmers who became fathers 25-30 years later):

“When asked what they perceived to be their contribution as fathers, the oldest generation found it difficult to answer or even understand the question at first, but after a while and some more talking they decided that their contribution as fathers lay in introducing and involving their children in farm work” (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 103)

‘Younger’ Potential Successors

In stark contrast, *Younger Potential Successors*, born in the 1980s and 1990s (see Table 7.1), were brought up in a period that emphasised *choice* and in which the individual now took precedence over the collective. Gullestad (1997: 215) described the general implications of this wider societal change on children and childhood:

“To attain the ideal of being oneself, children must justify their values in terms of their own individual convictions and preferences, not in terms of the convictions and preferences of their parents. Parents today transmit the ability to be oneself and to develop oneself, rather than specific ideas and specific values.”

Table 7.1
Age range difference

<i>Group</i>	<i>DOB range</i>
Older	1962-1977
Younger	1985-1992

No longer solely concerned with ‘creating’ a successor, parents of these *Younger Potential Successors* have endeavoured to let children make their own choices. As Brandth and Overrein (2013: 107) observed amongst their younger cohort of fathers “tradition and status do not seem to play a strong role when it comes to their expectations of their children’s choices for the future, as the positional family has become weakened”. The weakening of the positional family system has liberated potential successors from precepts and family tradition; the ‘positional family system’ which Brandth and Overrein refer to (based on authority, emphasising communal meanings and ascribed roles, where the family as a whole takes precedence over the individual and personal goals are not encouraged), has been replaced by the ‘personal family system’ (based on democracy, where different family members are valued as individuals) (Kambourdis, 1991). The shift is best

summarised by Bjørkhaug and Wiborg (2010: 11) who suggest “the younger generation regards the farm as a means to serve the family and not the other way around”.

Interestingly, Brandth and Overrein (2013: 105) suggest this shift has been amplified by “technological development, improved efficiency and the rationalisation of farm operations have *made children redundant* at work in the sense that easy, slow-going tasks that do not demand machinery and technical know-how have disappeared”.

Understanding Progressiveness: A Typology

Having explored the changes to the wider societal context and its implications for parenting and the upbringing of farm children, it becomes possible to comprehend the differences in progressiveness between the younger and older cohorts. Broadly speaking (although there were a small number of exceptions, which are important not to discount and will therefore be explored in turn), the type of progression (*Conservative* or *Progressive*), were, to some extent determined by the potential successor’s **age** (and therefore their upbringing), and their subsequent **entry route**¹⁹ into farming (Figure 7.2).

¹⁹ It is important to note, *all* participants were Farmers’ children or Grandchildren, and therefore ‘entry route’ simply refers to what they did, or did not do, before returning to or starting work on the farm.

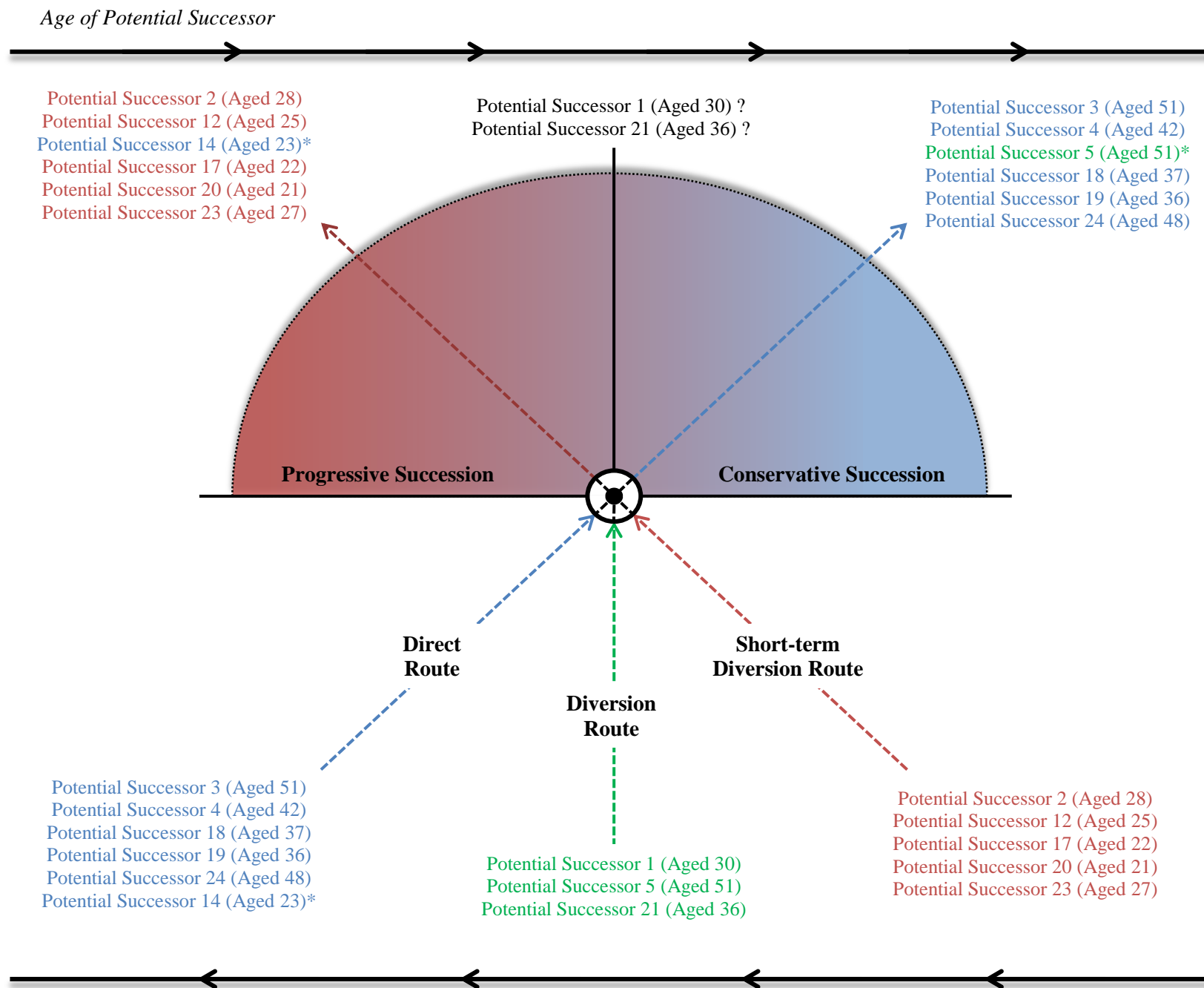


Figure 7.2 Potential successor routes into farming

Conservative Potential Successors: Upbringing and Entry

As established above, born in the 1960s and 1970s, *Conservative Potential Successors* were brought up 'to be' the farmer, following a very specific path set out for them, indicative of the emphasis on 'family farm thinking' and the importance of tradition remaining in this period. Farmer 9's narrative demonstrated the rigidity of the path set out for his son.

Grandpa bought it in 1914 [Okay, a so it's been in the family a long time then?] Yes a fair time [Yes and so that was sorry, your Granddad?] That was my Granddad yeah [And it was passed through to, uh your Dad and then you ... or?] *Then it passed to me, and now it's my son's turn* [Okay and that's your son?] Yeah he is, *so yeah he'll be fourth generation* (Farmer 9)

All but one of the *Conservative Potential Successors* (5/6) never left the farm, returning to the farm immediately after compulsory education or some kind of agricultural training.

I didn't go on at school, like I said, I didn't go onto college, I just came straight back here (Potential Successor 3)

Well, I left school in, um, well about 88, I think ... um, don't hold me to that, and then went to college so I came back here in probably 91 or 92, so yeah [...] I went to a local agricultural college and did an NDA (Potential Successor 4)

I left school, I did a bit of work here for a bit, and then [...] went to [a local agricultural] college (Potential Successor 19)

I did day-release for about 12 months ... was gonna go to a local agricultural college but Dad wasn't very keen on it ... so I did this day release course, which was farmers' sons once a day, met up at the farm, did a bit of fencing or whatever [...] Left school in the early 90s, 91 I think, came straight back, just working for my Dad, bit like any other workman really ... I was doing the hard work [laughs] and just gradually ended up doing more and more (Potential Successor 18)

It was, well was it 80, 81 I left school, come straight back on the farm (Potential Successor 24)

Direct Route: The Influence on Progressiveness

The evident propensity to pursue a 'direct route' into farming, characteristic of these potential successors, generally a product of the period in which they were brought up, means the 'threat' of these potential successors being 'tempted away' by off-farm careers was not a realistic concern for

incumbent farmers. Potential successor investment into the family story and their subsequent lack of experiences beyond farming meant that corresponding farmers have not felt the need to relinquish significant elements of managerial control as a tactic for maintaining potential successors' interests.

I think, if like me, you've grown up on a farm, you don't know any different, it's your lifestyle and you don't, and you haven't known much else so you carry on in farming
(Potential Successor 4)

Never really known much else though ... so it wasn't like something I just suddenly decided to do (Potential Successor 19)

The Case of Potential Successor 5: A Conservative Potential Successor?

Although born in the 1960s, unlike other 'older' potential successors, Potential Successor 5 did not follow a direct route into farming, taking a lengthy period away, attending University and eventually establishing a successful non-farming career. Unlike other potential successors in this age group, he attended a private school with a strong emphasis on educational attainment, meaning University became a logical step for him. He commented on the dilemma this emphasis on education had resulted in:

Mum and Dad sent us both away to school, out of a desire to educate us, which is fine in itself [...] and I think, having sent us away, and we were both relatively successful in our education and then in getting other careers, it left them in a bit of a pickle. They didn't consider, maybe not considered the succession plan for the farm in giving us the education that we had (Potential Successor 5)

Returning to work on the farm after University, he recalled how the fact the farm struggled to support two generations was made more difficult by his father's struggle to involve him in the business:

I felt that I hadn't got the autonomy to do what I wanted to do on the farm [...] certainly I didn't feel that the farm was progressing, that it wasn't going forward, there was no investment in buildings or machinery or development of breeding um and, I became very frustrated by that (Potential Successor 5)

Unlike the other 'older' potential successors, Potential Successor 5's experiences meant he was in a position to leave the farm and establish a non-farming career.

Having managed the farm alone for nearly 30 years, with no commitment from his son to ever return, perhaps unsurprisingly Farmer 5 has found it difficult to relinquish managerial control when Potential Successor 5 returned, and thus, despite his wealth of experiences, the transfer of managerial control in this case is akin to other *Conservative Potential Successors*:

It took quite a while for Dad and me to find how it was gonna work. To start with, he was here all the time, I couldn't do anything, I couldn't just do something, I couldn't just inject an ewe without telling him, and then he'd come over and he'd want to do it [...] And anyway, we've gradually worked that out, he's certainly let go of a lot of the work ...he leaves it all to me now and is very happy to do so but I don't underestimate how hard it was for him to do that (Potential Successor 5)

Whilst Potential Successor 5's story does not 'fit' with the typology, it is a useful reminder of the diversity of individual experiences and is an important part of understanding how managerial control is being transferred in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

The transfer of managerial control to potential successors who have pursued this kind of diversion is an interesting area of research. Some commentators such as Errington (2002) suggest that pursuing a diversion is desirable, giving the potential successor opportunity to develop a wide range of transferable skills, competences and ideas that can ease and facilitate the transfer of managerial control. Yet, as demonstrated in the case of Potential Successor 5, his return to the farm after a lengthy period of off-farm work has dramatically slowed the transfer of managerial control.

Progressive Potential Successors: Upbringing and Entry

In stark contrast, born in the 1980s and 1990s, *Progressive Potential Successors* had, in line with the wider societal changes described by Gullestad (1997), a contrasting upbringing, based on choice and finding for themselves, what they wanted to do. The following extracts demonstrate this emergent emphasis on choice particularly well.

I think that I'd far prefer them to be happy in what they do basically, whatever they chose to do, beside be a criminal or whatever [laughs] ... as long as it was constructive (Farmer 23)

If they don't wanna do it, if they aint interested then they are better off out of it (Farmer 17)

I'd still be quite happy if there was no successor, 'cause then I feel I could, my wife and I could retire earlier and um, take it, well, we've never put any pressure on our son to take on the farm (Farmer 2)

Farmer 23 demonstrated this emergent emphasis on choice, and critically, his sons' resulting experiences:

[And when was it that your sons kind of identified themselves as potential successors, you know that they wanted to farm?] Well, they both went to University doing various

things, and both spent a year or so on the farm, saving up money for travelling and I think in that year it kind of just clicked with them, you know? [You say they were at Uni doing various things, so they weren't studying agriculture?] No, not at the time ... they both ended up going back to do agricultural courses but I think it was after they both worked here to save up for travelling they realised they could do it [Okay] You know they'd always enjoyed it growing up ... so I wasn't surprised but yeah it was quite a definitive moment for both of them, you know it hadn't really been on the cards so to speak [Yeah] We didn't really want the sons to come home straight on the farm, so we said either go and work for somebody else or get an education, and you know, rather than just fall into it, you gotta want it, you gotta choose it ... it's a tough way of life, you don't chose it for money, you choose it for love basically, and if you don't really love it, I wouldn't advise anybody to do it, 'cause it's not, it's not easy, it's tough ... (Farmer 23)

Similarly, Ball and Wiley (2005: 42) recognised 'career awareness and individual exploration' as a mechanism used to encourage their children to *consider* farming as a career. They documented how "parents indicated exposing children to a variety of careers through reading, community activities, career days or Sunday school as a way to support different endeavours" and also observed how "parents [...] encouraged pre-adolescent children to explore a 'bigger world'", exposing them "to a variety of activities and interests" (42).

As a result of the freedom that characterised their upbringing, *all* but one²⁰ of the younger cohort of potential successors have taken or are taking a *short-term diversion route*, involving a period of time away from farming (or at least away from the home farm), typically involving Further or Higher Education, obtaining significant or higher level qualifications, having short- to medium- term non-agricultural jobs and/or undertaking a period of foreign travel. Regardless of activity, those who followed the *short-term diversion route* did not return immediately to the farm and were encouraged by their parents to take the time to try different things, before *choosing* for themselves to return to the farm and farming (Table 7.2 lists their experiences).

²⁰ Potential Successor 14 will be discussed below

Table 7.2*Progressive Potential Successors' qualifications and work experiences*

<i>Potential Successor</i>	<i>Qualifications/work experience/other experiences</i>
Potential Successor 2	A-levels Bachelor's degree (in non-agricultural subject) Several off-farm, non-agricultural jobs Lived away from the farm when attending University Went travelling
Potential Successor 12	National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) Subsequently took a Level 4 University Qualification in Agriculture
Potential Successor 17	Undertaking National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) Several off-farm, non-agricultural jobs
Potential Successor 20	A-levels Had an off-farm, non-agricultural job Undertaking a National Vocational Qualification Level 3 course in Business Management Currently planning to go travelling
Potential Successor 23	Bachelor's degree (in non-agricultural subject) Several jobs on other farms Diploma in Agriculture Lived away from the farm when attending University Went travelling

Rather than following family tradition (typical of the older cohort of potential successors), parents of these *Younger Potential Successors*, did not *expect* their children to succeed and were keen for them to explore different options for themselves, hence their array of endeavours.

Short-Term Diversion: The Influence on Progressiveness

The evident tendency of *Younger Potential Successors* to pursue a short-term diversion before entering farming, a product of their upbringing, means the 'threat' of these potential successors being 'tempted away' by off-farm careers is very real, having 'seen the other side of life'. Their experiences and qualifications, afforded by this emergent foregrounding of the individual, has made these potential successors employable beyond farming (particularly in comparison to the older group of potential successors who had a very narrow set of experiences, having been brought up in accordance with the expectation that they would take over the farm).

I've got my degree and that, I'd like to make use of it, but um, I'm sort of like got my options open, if something turns up that I fancy, I may go off and give it a go [...] I'm just still taking it day by day really (Potential Successor 2)

It is this awareness of what their potential successors *could* be doing that distinguishes between the rates of the transfer of managerial control. Aware of their potential successors' capabilities and the possibilities open to them, farmers expressed a need to extensively involve potential successors in the

running of the farm business, to keep them involved, interested and feeling valued, to safeguard their long-term interest in the farm and thus the eventual likelihood of succession. As observed by Weston (1977: 242), “it would seem one of the major causes of dissatisfaction among sons is their exclusion from management decisions”; by including potential successors in management decisions, farmers are helping to keep their interest, and thus increasing the chances of succession in the longer term. With specific reference to his daughter’s ability to “do anything” career-wise and his subsequent desire to give her a good degree of freedom on the farm, Farmer 20 provides a particularly good example of how potential successors’ experiences shape the transfer of managerial control.

I’m quite a modern, what I call quite a modern farmer ... but you see some of ‘em, the Grandad’s who’s farming in his eighties, but it’s no good is it? [No, it isn’t, it’s what we call the ‘farmer’s boy’ problem, where the farmer is still hanging onto the reigns of the farm] Yeah it’s no good [And the Grandson or the son has got all these good ideas and they’re not allowed to do it, so ...] Yeah it’s like anything ... if I were like that, if I was like that with Melanie, didn’t give her freedom, she wouldn’t be interested ... and I don’t think I’d expect ‘er to be, you know, she’s a capable girl, she could do anything, she’s bright ... and you’ve gotta have these new ideas ‘cause our industry is just moving on all the time, you know ... you know ... you gotta move with the times (Farmer 20)

Bordieu’s concept of embodied cultural capital is useful in understanding farmer’s evident desire to accommodate and engage the potential successor. Embodied cultural capital derives from the process of self-improvement, and is “present in the form of learned skills and knowledge (e.g. how and when to plough, how to manage farm dogs, how to use computers, and so on)” (Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011: 97). Critically, cultural capital is capable of generating symbolic capital. In other words, the process of learning and deploying new skills (embodied cultural capital), form an important source of status, prestige and recognition (symbolic capital) for potential successors; status, prestige and recognition that farmers fear, the well qualified and experienced potential successors in this group, may not be prepared to wait to gratify and are available for these employable individuals in other industries or settings. Similarly, Handler (1990, 1992) suggested that potential successors were more likely to have a ‘positive succession experience’ when (amongst other things) they, fulfilled career, psychosocial, and life stage opportunities in the context of the business, and were able to exercise personal influence in the family business.

Although Farmer 23 described his struggle to delegate responsibilities to his sons, he also described how he felt he *had* to delegate decision making and ‘change significantly’, “to allow different ideas and different ambitions to come through”. Although evidently a very difficult process for him to go through, the decision to delegate to his potential successors was made to ultimately safeguard the likelihood of succession.

It's actually been the most difficult thing I've ever had to do, 'cause I've always done stuff for myself and just make a decision and do it basically [...] but it is much more difficult, to sort of delegate to be able to go with different decisions and it's you know, I've found that the most difficult thing I've done, but having said that, *I really want to make it work*, but, so yes, we have, we've had to change significantly really, what we do, to try and give responsibility or to allow, to allow different ideas and different ambitions to come through and make sure they're learning for the future (Farmer 23)

The desire to include potential successors in 'higher rung' decisions and activities is used to maintain their interest and involvement in the farm, in a similar way to investment behaviour (Section 7.2). Ultimately, incorporating potential successors into these aspects ensures they are active and engaged, and critically feel they are applying themselves and utilising the skills they have.

The one potential successor who was evidently very progressive, but unlike the other *Progressive Potential Successors*, had not pursued a short-term diversion was Potential Successor 14. Although born in the 1990s and brought up in a period that prioritised the individual, and put "a greater emphasis on choice and resourcing children to meet the demands for skills in future society" (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 109), Potential Successor 14 described a very direct route into farming, leaving school, achieving a National Diploma in Agriculture at a local agricultural college and returning to the farm. He attributed the rapidity of his entry to his uncle's decision to leave the farm after the FMD epidemic in 2001 and the subsequent and pressing *need* for him to return to the farm, as his Granddad was doing increasingly less. This has thrust a number of responsibilities upon Potential Successor 14:

[So what do you do on the farm then? What's your kind of role?] Well, Granddad's doing less and less, um, so it's me and the workman running it, I do all the cows, that's the best bit ... so I do all of that really (Potential Successor 14)

Following his uncle's exit from farm during the FMD epidemic and subsequent uncertainty as to the inclusion of the farm in his long-term plans, Farmer 14 sees a 'second chance' for succession in his Grandson (Potential Successor 14) and has thus delegated and been keen to delegate tasks and responsibilities to him, in a bid to accommodate him and sustain his interest in the farm.

[Okay ... and what's your involvement at the moment then?] I'm still doing the books, although I'm trying to get rid of the job ... but I don't seem to get much luck [Do you mean pass it to your Grandson?] Yeah that's right, yeah ... get him properly involved (Farmer 14)

Although there is merit in the suggested generalised framework, which makes a broad and important statement about the influence of successors' experiences on the type of managerial control, the

example of Potential Successor 14 serves to remind us that reasons for the type of succession can be many and varied.

Progressive Farmers and Retirement

In stark contrast to the previous group of farmers, who were very reluctant to even discuss or plan their retirement, a number of farmers in this group were looking forward to retirement and the opportunities available to them.

You know, if my son chooses not to farm, I won't hang around, you know, I'm 58 now, so I will want a proper retirement [...] My Dad always used to say he was gonna retire by the sea, but he never did, he retired in a bungalow just out in the lane, in the orchard, yeah he didn't go anywhere, but I think we would retire away, like even if my son was living here, I, I don't really want to be in a bungalow up the top of the lane, I just don't know from ... I don't think that way you'd ever retire, unless there's some distance then that retirement never happens, I love it here at [the farm] you see, I really do ... um, but I'd like, looking ahead, I would like some sort of retirement, away from the farm here [Yeah] I think from my wife's point of view, she'd maybe end up doing paper work for the rest of her life [laughs] and I'd wanna be telling my son what to do, you know? [Yeah] I'd wanna get a bit of closure on farming really [Would you find that an easy thing to do?] Probably at the beginning yeah I would find it difficult ... but it would make things easier in the long term [Yeah of course] But it is difficult for farming families to hand over, isn't it? (Farmer 2)

Desire to retire was most commonly expressed in terms of 'not wanting to be farming in old age'.

I won't wanna be one of those farmers whose telling 'er what to do when I'm 90 [laughs], so we'll have to think about it properly (Farmer 17)

I mean I've always, I'm trying the same with my daughter, she's her own boss and I was always my own boss, I wasn't tied, I mean I had my own ideas and he had his, you know ... I'm quite a modern, what I call quite a modern farmer ... but you see some of 'em, the Grandad's who's farming in his eighties, but it's no good is it? (Farmer 20)

Well, no not really, not at the moment anyway, we will eventually wanna get something sorted by obviously my daughter's not even been working here full-time for sorta 18 months yet, so it's early days, but as I say, she's taken to it really well, so we'll see ... um ... the biggest trouble I've been through is when me Dad died 12 months ago, well the trouble is, obviously he had various assets and one thing, I'm definitely gonna do is get it all in place, so the kids aren't having to pay (Farmer 20)

What set this group apart from the *Conservative Farmers* are the experiences of these farmers as fathers. As well as creating a highly skilled and worldly generation of potential successors, the greater emphasis on choice that appears to characterise the upbringing of potential successors in this group, critically “requires a different fathering competence for agricultural fathers”, with farming fathers becoming “caught up in the norms of intensive parenting, investing time and energy in activities that are not farm-related, but are thought to improve their children’s chances in late modern capitalist society” (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 108). As described by Farmer 23 (p.22), the emphasis farmers in this group put on potential successor *choice*, meant potential successors (and their siblings) were encouraged to pursue a wealth of ‘off-farm’ experiences that their fathers and grandfathers had not had, including going to college or University, living in different areas and cities, non-agricultural and off-farm jobs and travelling the world (Table 7.2).

The potential successors’ experiences have, as a minimum, opened up the farmer’s eyes to and (albeit secondarily) *connected* these farmers into what Brandth and Overrein (2013) describe as ‘new arenas’ outside the farm. For example, Farmer 2 talked generally of his daughter’s move to a nearby city, after having been to University; he interestingly remarked how he had become fond of where his daughter now lived, having helped her during her move there and has since even been able to envisage a happy retirement there.

Our daughter really didn’t show any interest, she’s interested in the farm, she’s a very country girl, but she had no inclination of wanted to take over the farm, and even though she only moved to [nearby city], when she got married, she found that quite difficult to begin with, she felt out, well for 12, 18 months maybe she felt, she was quite unhappy, but she now loves it and I quite like it too, even though it’s only 30 miles away and it’s a lovely city, um, she, it was a shock to her, even though she’d been away to University and all of that, but I guess it was much more permanent, but she really had no inclination to come and be a farmer

He concluded:

[nearby city] is a really nice city and it’s not huge ... my Dad always used to say he was gonna retire by the sea, but he never did, he retired in a bungalow just out in the lane, in the orchard, yeah he didn’t go anywhere, but I think we would retire away, like even if my son was living here, I, I don’t really want to be in a bungalow up the top of the lane, I just don’t know from ... I don’t think that way you’d ever retire, unless there’s some distance then that retirement never happens, I love it here at [the farm], you see, I really do ... um, but I’d like, looking ahead, I would like some sort of retirement, away from the farm here (Farmer 2)

Similarly, Farmer 17 spoke of his plans to retire.

I'd think I'd probably wanna get to about 60, maybe 65 (Farmer 17)

Attributing his plans to pressure from his wife and daughters to experience different places or things.

I'd think I'd probably wanna get to about 60, maybe 65. I'm always getting moaned at from these lot 'cause I don't go anywhere, so yeah it's nice to have a possibility of succession, so I know I can retire. I am quite pleased about it really, yeah I am, really pleased (Farmer 17)

The often vast experiences of current farmer's children, during their teens and early twenties have connected farmers to these 'new arenas' and appears to have fostered an openness to new experiences, which have allowed farmers to see *beyond* the farm and life as a farmer. If we understand a major difficulty associated with retirement is the "*change* in the pattern of his [the farmer's] activities, interests and time" (Commins, 1973: 45), or entering the unknown in this respect, their exposure to alternative places and activities, via their children, enabled some of the farmers in this group to envisage the possible pattern of activities, interests and time open to them in retirement.

One farmer's particularly insightful description of the significance of farming to farmers' lives helps elucidate this point.

I think retirement as such is the most difficult thing because if you don't have a lot of hobbies, then um, well most people have hobbies but obviously your living tends to be your hobby ... so retirement itself tends to be very difficult (Farmer 23)

The connection between farmers and these new domains, forged through the experiences of their children, appears to have helped many of the farmers in this group envisage and even look forward to (Farmers 2, 17 and 20) these alternative experiences and places open to them during retirement, away from the farm. Combine this with the *need* to accommodate and give responsibility to potential successors felt by these farmers, retirement becomes both necessary *and* in part, desirable. Domains that were previously unknown and therefore understandably daunting, have become increasingly familiar and open to farmers, serving to reassure them that they *can* retire and (in some cases) mean retirement is even desirable; the prime example being Farmer 2's involvement in his daughter's move to a nearby city and his subsequent love of the area and desire to retire away from the farm.

[This is a bit off topic but if you retired, would you want to kind of stay in the area or ...?] Well this, this, I don't know, when it comes to that decision, I do like where, well my daughter lives in [suburb of nearby city], um, right next to the park, backs onto the park there, and it's lovely, I just love it there, maybe it's because I helped her do her

garden when they bought the house, and um, I feel ... [I like [nearby city] too] it's a really nice city and it's not huge [...] I love it here at [the farm] you see, I really do ... um, but I'd like, looking ahead, I would like some sort of retirement, away from the farm here (Farmer 2)

It is important to point out that, just like the previous group, envisioning retirement was not necessarily easy for the farmers concerned, and the apparent eagerness should not overshadow the difficulty of retirement; as Farmer 2, one of the most eager to retire of all participants, testified, “probably at the beginning [...] I would find it difficult”. Critically, their exposure to a wealth of retirement locations and activities means many farmers in this group have found envisaging retirement *easier* than the previous group.

Progressive Potential Successors: Appreciation and Sensitivity?

Unlike potential successors in the previous group, who were careful to accommodate their fathers' suggestions when it came to farm business decisions, potential successors in this group, were able to introduce new ways of doing things, which often meant challenging (quite vehemently) the incumbent.

He's very much like stuck in his ways, 'cause obviously he's been doing this all his life and by himself for quite a long time now so he, and he knows his stock, whereas, I've come in and he doesn't wanna be told sometimes, but I just have to tell him (Potential Successor 20)

Potential Successor 20 continued to describe how she challenged her father because she felt he was not listening to her.

It came to blows when I told Dad that he didn't listen to me, and I didn't wanna work for him anymore and ever since then, he's been really lenient on me, and I've just kind of done my own thing, started doing things as I see fit ... but there's ups and downs (Potential Successor 20)

Since challenging her father, Potential Successor 20 reported being able to 'do things as she saw fit' on the farm. She later suggested the importance of change:

You've gotta think of new ways and new ideas and wanna change things, I think that's the key (Potential Successor 20)

Similarly, Potential Successor 17 described how she had to 'push' ideas for her father to listen and take them on board.

[And how have you found you know, suggesting ideas to your Dad?] Yeah he's reasonably open to ideas, yeah he listens to me [...] I do have to push it a little bit, you know [laughs] but he definitely takes my suggestions on board (Potential Successor 17)

Whilst acclaiming his opportunity for input into the family business, Potential Successor 23 also described having to be somewhat unrelenting when it came to getting ideas across to his father.

I get a voice too ... I mean, I might have to shout for it to be heard, or shout a few times [laughs] but if I want to make a suggestion about the way we're doing something, I can and I do (Potential Successor 23)

Although Potential Successor 2 had yet to challenge his father, he confidently suggested:

I don't think he'd ignore what I said if I said we should buy this or do this or whatever ... and I feel fairly confident that if to start with he didn't listen, I could convince him otherwise, I'm sure I could persuade him if it was good for the farm (Potential Successor 2)

Unlike *Conservative Potential Successors*, who, constrained by emotionally driven family relationships, endeavoured to continually satisfy the incumbent by adhering to their way of doing things, the upbringing of *Progressive Potential Successors*, predicated on choice and critically, unimpeded by obligations (Brandth and Overrein, 2013) means these potential successors are not afraid to negotiate with or even challenge the incumbent.

Furthermore, the incidence and strength of these challenges further suggests the wealth of life experiences that characterise this group, has acted to dilute the potency of what Schwass' describes as *emotionally driven family relationships* and the feelings of obligation that accompany them.

If we understand the ability to change and introduce new ways of doing things as desirable in responding to the litany of challenges facing the industry (Leach, 2012), then, as Morris *et al* (1997) assert, this kind of conflict between farmer and potential successor is perhaps desirable. Morris *et al* (1997: 399) suggest "it may be that *some level* of conflict or strife is a prerequisite for the transition to have a significant impact on performance". Not only does conflict enhance the successor effect i.e. *prior to the handover* of managerial control, encouraging incumbents to action new ideas, and adopt new methods and technologies introduced by the potential successor, but it also frees the potential successor from tradition and obligation and allows them to assert themselves and think independently, with potential long-term implications for their ability to run and progress the farm business. This understanding of a certain level of conflict being desirable has implications for our understanding of 'effective succession'. As Lobley *et al* (2010: 60) suggest:

“Effectiveness can perhaps be measured first in terms of the presence of a successor to the business, and second, in the timeliness and ‘smoothness’ of transfer to that successor of the business”

In view of this discussion and the apparent importance of a degree of conflict, a more appropriate measure of effective succession may be: firstly, the presence of a successor to the business, and secondly, in the timeliness and appropriate transfer of managerial control, which may include *some level* of intergenerational conflict or opportunity for the potential successor to make their mark on the business.

Short-Term Diversions: Implications for the Timing of Succession

With the average age of UK farmers now 59 years old (see Table 7.3), and 58 per cent of EU farms in the hands of over-55s, the ageing farming population has been identified by some as a “demographic challenge that could limit global food production” (The Guardian Online, 2014a). And, as Williams and Farrington (2006: 3) suggest “younger entrants deemed to be more innovative, motivated towards the longer term and better able to adapt, thus in aggregate terms allowing the sector to become more *productive, competitive and viable*” (emphasis added).

Table 7.3
Age of UK farmers

	% of holders				
	2000	2003	2005	2007	2010
Under 35	5	3	3	3	3
35- 44	18	15	14	12	11
45 – 54	26	24	23	23	25
55 – 64	26	29	29	29	29
65 +	25	29	31	33	32
Median age	56	58	58	59	59

Source: Defra (2012)

Ultimately, as demonstrated in the preceding quotes, short-term diversions and the subsequent influence on potential successor progressiveness have the potential to facilitate faster transfers of managerial control, and thus lower to the average age of farmers.

[And do you have a kind of set time in mind that maybe your Dad would wanna retire?]
He always talks about 55, so I don’t, I don’t think, he, he’s very similar to my Granddad, and I’m very similar to him, in that if he doesn’t wanna do something anymore, he’s not gonna do it anymore [Okay, and if he’s 55, how old will you be?] I’d probably be about 27 I think (Potential Successor 20)

7.4.4 Other Succession Routes: The ‘Professional Detour’

Numerically smaller (characteristic of 2 potential successors), but also important in our understanding of succession and succession routes, were those potential successors who intended to succeed to the farm in the future, but were pursuing other careers in the meantime. Similarly, *only* 10.2 per cent of potential successors aged 16 and over were identified as taking a professional detour in the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey (Lobley, 2010), which was the lowest of all the areas surveyed, and was particularly low compared with Iowa (45.3 per cent), North Carolina (37 per cent) and Austria (35.2 per cent). Errington (2002: 8) termed this a ‘professional detour’, which included those who were currently “running a non-farm business, employed off-farm or travelling abroad” (Errington, 2002: 8).

Even within this small cohort of potential successors, there were huge variations in the nature of their professional detours and reasons for taking them.

As a result of foot and mouth disease, instead of moving away, Potential Successor 1 decided to stay locally to support his mother and father on the family farm. He later looked for and secured a non-agricultural job, which he has since continued, and has established a successful career. However, his long term plan is to come back to the farm. He insisted:

In the next 10 or 12 or 15 years, whenever I can afford to [...] whether it’ll be sooner, I don’t know, I *will* stop what I’m doing [...] and I will, I’ll be here to do this (Potential Successor 1)

He continued by suggesting:

Before I go doing anything, we want to be in a position whereby they’re done and generating income for us ... and then I will probably, you know, then be in a position, having got my place paid for by and large, to come back into the farm (Potential Successor 1)

Now 30 years old, Potential Successor 1’s decision to pursue an off-farm career is testament to the emergent importance of the individual and the “greater emphasis [parents] put on choice, and resourcing their children to meet the demands for skills in future society” (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 109). The way Farmer 1’s wife described the significance of their son deciding *not* to go away to University evidences the strength of this; to Farmer 1 and his wife, going away to University had become a normal part of growing up for their son’s generation, and at the time, it was a surprise to them that he decided not to go.

One day he said ‘Mum, I’ve got something to tell you’ ... I thought ‘Oh God’ ... and he said ‘I don’t want to go away’ ... I mean that was alien to me, because it’s automatic isn’t

it, you do A-Levels ... [A rite of passage almost?] Yeah ... and then you go to Uni
(Farmer 1's wife)

As was the case with *Progressive Potential Successors*, Potential Successor 1 was born and raised in a period where the individual was 'foregrounded and idealised'. Like parents of *Progressive Potential Successors*, Farmer 1 and his wife "put weight on aspects in working life such as decent wages, working conditions and having colleagues and leisure time" (Brandth and Overrein, 2013: 107):

I think he would be foolish to think he could throw in the towel at work and come home and expect the same standard of living because there isn't that sort of money in it, is there? (Farmer 1's wife)

In contrast, in his late 30s, Potential Successor 21, was previously working on the farm full-time and like other's his age, suggested he was 'not looking to do anything else' having been involved in the farm from a young age. Unlike Potential Successor 1, who was encouraged to pursue further education, Potential Successor 1's detour emerged from his spontaneous curiosity to explore Youth Work, strongly linked to his and his wife's spirituality:

We were fully planning to farm full-time, um, no other thought really, not that I was not wanting to think about it, it was just what was always gonna happen [Okay] And I was very much enjoying it, there's no doubt that I wasn't looking to do anything else but then as my partner and I were planning in a sense, my partner's career, and as we were looking to marry, um we both felt, or I felt let's, maybe I got itchy feet, let's just try, certainly wasn't disappointed or sad with what was happening here, it was just a case of curiosity [Okay] So the initial commitment was to, when we got married was to go on a two year training programme in Youth Work [Okay] [...] those two years became seven [Okay, as they do] Yes, so the training went on to become a full, you know, did a three year degree course and BA [BA, oh that's awesome] So that was five years of training to do that and which then was a degree that becomes a career move or obviously a job then, a wage packet and I was enjoying that and it just progressed (Potential Successor 21)

Although Farmer 21 asserted how he was pleased that his son was pursuing a career that he enjoyed, he also expressed a degree of regret and some concern that his son was not currently working on the farm and the implications of this for the longer-term chance of succession:

His job involves the Church, which is something he feels strongly about and we are happy about that ... that he's pursuing something, you know, that he feels, he enjoys ... but at the same time, it's difficult, to suddenly not have him here [...] we sort of worked quite hard to keep the place going ... to pass it on, you know (Farmer 21)

Although they have both established successful off-farm careers, Potential Successors 1 and 2 both insisted that they would, at some point, leave their current jobs and return to the farm; however, what is common in both examples is, both potential successors doubted the extent to which they would actually pursue the farm as a business. Although Potential Successor 21 affirmed his love of the lifestyle, he was unsure what direction he would eventually take the farm and suggested he would like to incorporate aspects of his current work:

[Do you see yourself as a kind of coming back to the farm eventually full time, or do you feel that you will continue helping out or ...?] Personally, I don't want, I don't think I'll ever give up the farm completely, uh, the want or to work with people as well as animals [Okay, yeah] I love the lifestyle, I love the farm, the animals and slight seclusion [Yeah] But I also very much like working with well, people, particularly young people, specifically to encourage and to empower them [...] I sort of think, uh, there will always be a bit of both, a possible hope [Okay] Would be that the two overlap a bit, that people might come, that we use part of the farm here to have some groups, people, individuals well yes (Potential Successor 21)

Clearly, Potential Successor 21 has a passion for his current work (he seemed very animated and enthusiastic when talking about it) and it seemed that returning to the farm was not his first choice.

Although Potential Successor 1 was notably more enthusiastic about his desire to farm than Potential Successor 21, he was open about the fact that financially, farming would not allow him to maintain the same standard of living.

The reason I'm doing what I'm doing at the moment, is purely financial, you know, it's a means to an end really ... it's just ... it's a gratifying job and everything else, but it is, I would prefer to be waking up, going out and working with him, um and, but financially, you know, yeah we could probably up production and I could probably make a living out of farming, but I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing (Potential Successor 1)

Like Potential Successor 21, Potential Successor 1 maintained he would never sell the farm, but he was also unsure as to what he would do with the farm as a business.

It won't be sold, it won't be sold and business wise, you know ... I don't know, I, I, it'll be a lifestyle decision for me, rather than a financial decision ... and then if I can make a success out of the business going forward then that'll be a bonus (Potential Successor 1)

Although neither potential successor reported any pressure to continue the farm, unlike the parents of *Progressive Potential Successors* who as above, were keen for their children to choose what they wanted to do in life, and less concerned with identifying a successor ...

I think that I'd far prefer them to be happy in what they do basically, whatever they chose to do, beside be a criminal or whatever [laughs] ... as long as it was constructive, but having said that, it was nice to have them, to have them want to come into the farm, yes (Farmer 23)

... Farmers 1 and 21 were both *particularly* keen to identify a next generation, which would have been obvious to the potential successor:

I think it's actually sort of what you actually work for (Farmer 1)

His wife concurred, suggesting:

He's right, yeah, the whole point in carrying on now and trying to keep things going is for our son

Furthermore, with reference to her son, Potential Successor 1's mother, insisted:

He won't sell the farm, we know he won't sell the farm, it will stay as a unit

Similarly, Farmer 21 valued identification of a next generation.

[Is it important for you to identify a next generation?] If I'm honest, yes ... yes it really is
[Okay] This farm, you know, it's part of our family (Farmer 21)

As demonstrated in the above narratives, it appears that these potential successors have received mixed messages from their parents who have simultaneously (and conflictingly) emphasised the importance of individual goals *and* the importance of identifying a successor to them. For these potential successors, their *professional detour* before returning to the farm, appears to represent a compromise; a way of pursuing their own interests and goals, as encouraged in the case of Potential Successor 1, but also, satisfying their parents' desire to identify a successor.

As above, both potential successors doubted the extent to which they would productively run the farm. Having told me about his hope to be able to incorporate the farm into his Youth Work, I asked Potential Successor 21:

[So you don't see you know the farm kind of, you don't see you selling up or you know, leaving here ...?] No [You'll maintain that connection to it in some way] Sure, definitely

He then continued to describe what this might entail.

At very worse in the short term we might reduce the business right down and sow it to grass, change our business, but ultimately we don't intend on losing the commodity of the farm (Potential Successor 21)

Similarly, Potential Successor 1 also doubted the extent to which he would run the farm as a productive unit.

It won't be sold, it won't be sold and business wise, you know ... I don't know, I, I, it'll be a lifestyle decision for me, rather than a financial decision ... and then if I can make a success out of the business going forward then that'll be a bonus (Potential Successor 1)

The desire to 'keep the name on the land', even at the expense of the farm as a productive unit, was also observed amongst farmers interviewed by Brandth and Overrein (2013: 107), who claimed:

"I still hope one of them will take on the ownership of the farm, but it makes no difference to me if the farm continues to be run like a farm or if they only use the farm as a place to live – without any production"

Given the proclaimed need to sustainably 'exploit spare capacity in farming' (NFU, cited in Potter, 2009: 53) associated with the delivery of food security objectives, this 'trade off' between keeping the farm in the family and pursuing other interests and the resulting failure to use land in a farming capacity represents a potential threat to national productivity and the industry's ability to respond to the food security challenge.

What is perhaps surprising about these potential successors, is, although they had successful and demanding careers in non-farming roles, they both still remained significantly involved in the farm. Potential Successor 1 even (albeit light-heartedly) described his commitment to the farm as his full-time job, and his regular job as merely part-time.

[Can I ask what, obviously your full-time in your job, but um, you work here, you work out ...] That's my part-time job ... this is my full-time job [laughs] (Potential Successor 1)

Potential Successor 21 claimed to do an average of 20 hours per week on the farm, in addition to his regular working hours.

[Okay that's fine, um and how have you come to be kind of, so you work on the farm for quite a few hours a week?] Yeah, yeah I do what I can [Could you sort of put a number of hours you did on the farm in a typical week, or does it vary depending upon what you are doing elsewhere?] I do about 20, average about 20 here (Potential Successor 21)

Despite the time they spent on the farm, they fulfilled a very simple role; typically used as a source of manual labour. With reference to his contribution to the farm, Potential Successor 21 described himself as 'spare pair of hands'.

I do what I can, help out where I can. I'm a spare pair of hands (Potential Successor 21)

The nature of their involvement in the farm and the demands of their off-farm jobs, means they are particularly detached from non-manual activities and responsibilities, so much so that both potential successors expressed concerns over their eventual ability to deal with the finances and paperwork. Similarly, using *FARMTRANSFERS* data, Uchiyama *et al* (2008: 40) expressed concern over the little opportunity the diversion route gives successors to “work alongside the farmer and benefit from the transfer of intangible resources”, with the majority of those potential successors who have pursued a diversion route, *still* in their off-farm job less than 5 years before the farmer’s retirement (Uchiyama *et al*, 2008). However, unlike *Conservative Potential Successors*, Potential Successor 1 and 21 were attuned to their likely inadequacies and were aware of what they needed to do to rectify them, perhaps stemming from their respective experiences of the professional setting, where they would be accustomed to formal professional development.

The only thing I might want to look into is more business side of the training because that serves a massive part and that side of things I’m not fully aware of [Okay] So to develop my future in farming, I actually need to look at paperwork, business side, you know, accountants, not going to do accountancy but all of that ... [Yeah so at the moment you’re not involved in that sort of aspect at all] No (Potential Successor 21)

I’m not a legal partner in the business at this stage ... I have little to do with the finances, um, Mum is quite keen to retain a handle on everything [...] I mean there’s been no requirement for me to be involved in the finances, aside from the odd injection of capital [...] But paperwork and all the paperwork that goes with the farm these days, I’ve not, I’ve not had to get involved with ... I probably should, because um, I’m gonna be left in a position where um, I’m gonna be trying to start from (Potential Successor 1)

Contrastingly, there is also some belief that potential successor pursuing a professional detour “to acquire a different set of skills from the outside the home farm, skills which may be particularly helpful at times when farming needs to adjust to different circumstances” (Uchiyama, 2008: 20), although there is no empirical evidence from the family farming literature to support this suggestion.

If we understand succession as the transfer of managerial control, then for these potential successors, succession is yet to start. As stated above, it is hard to draw conclusions from such a small number of examples, but it appears that without the need to delegate aspects of managerial control, because of their potential successor’s off-farm involvement, understandably farmers lacked the impetus to even think about it. As already discussed, retirement is difficult for farmers, involving “a change in his established relationships with his neighbours and relatives, a change in the way these people evaluate or treat him, thus affecting his own feel of well-being, a change in the pattern of his activities, interests and time, and a change in the meaning which his surroundings have for him” (Commins, 1973: 45); having enjoyed complete control over the farm for such a significant period, the thought of

relinquishing control is understandably particularly difficult. Whilst the thought of relinquishing control is hard for *all* farmers, those for whom succession has been a protracted process and have perhaps gotten used to having to 'share' with their potential successor, the unimpeded control enjoyed by these farmers becomes particularly difficult to give up.

I think it's more our plan, um, it's very difficult, when do you sign things over? It's *very* difficult ... so that's probably the biggest question, isn't it? (Farmer 1's wife)

Other than Nalson's (1968) description of Staffordshire farming in the mid-1960s, and later in 1997 the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey, there has been scant engagement with the professional detour as a succession route, with it being overshadowed by more conventional routes, where the potential successor returns to the farm after completing their education. Although numerically less prevalent, the impacts of the professional route are potentially significant. Whilst this work has made important headway by highlighting the contemporary relevance of the professional detour as a succession route and suggested some of the potential impacts of the detour, further work is needed to develop an understanding of its prevalence, how and why it occurs, and critically, expound its impact on farmer behaviour, post-handover.

7.4.5 Emergent Succession Routes: Implications for Gasson and Errington's Ideal Types

Unlike, Gasson and Errington (1993) who identified four distinct succession routes or patterns of the transfer of managerial control, including the *stand-by holding*, the *separate enterprise*, the *partnership* and the *farmer's boy*, there were not such clear patterns evident in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Having started working on the farm, potential successors worked *alongside* their father; (interesting and important) differences are found instead, in the speed and ease at which these potential successors acquire managerial control. Failure to clearly identify Gasson and Errington's four ideal types amongst participating farms, indicates how the way managerial control is being transferred has changed over time; a culmination of work in the 1980s and early 1990s, it is unsurprising that Gasson and Errington's ideal types are no longer (as) relevant. As Williams and Farrington (2006: 3) identify, "the successional process has become increasingly complex as patterns of succession and inheritance continue to adapt to changing economic and social conditions".

For example, the *stand-by holding*, where "the potential successor is set up by the father on a separate farm where he works for a number of years" (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 205), would now be considered largely impossible for farmers to finance, and was not observed in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Even in his discussion of *FARMTRANSFERS* data from 1997, Errington (2002: 10) recognised how "relatively few successors appear to prepare for taking over managerial control of the farm by running a separate 'standby farm'", concluding that the *stand-by holding* "appears to be relatively rare in either England or Canada, account for only 6% in England". Although

broad, *Progressive* and *Conservative* transfers appear to be a truer representation of contemporary experiences of transfer.

Whilst the two types of transfer identified here do not explicitly match any of the four groups, they do contain elements of the different types. The first cohort of potential successors, as outlined above, shared many characteristics of Gasson and Errington's *farmer's boy*, in that compared to the second cohort, they lacked (opportunity to develop) managerial skills. Unlike Gasson and Errington's *farmer's boy*, and as recently raised by Steiger *et al* (2012: 99), who found that some of the 'farmer's boys' identified actually showed "good business and managerial skills and high motivation", these potential successors demonstrated considerable responsibility for many aspects of the farm. The second cohort of potential successors, as demonstrated, had the autonomy akin to the *separate enterprise* or *stand-by holding* but the equality of the working relationship between the potential successor and the incumbent was resonant of the *partnership* pattern.

7.5 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has explored the succession status of farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, and subsequently explored the way in which managerial control is being transferred between generations. Unlike previous explorations of these issues, they have been explored here using a combination of findings from farmers' and potential successors' narratives.

The analysis broadly dismisses previous claims of a crisis in succession, with only 1 farmer out of the 26 farmers interviewed, ruling out succession. Further analysis revealed a difference between 'realistically hopeful' farmers, for whom succession is likely, but recognise there is a chance it may not materialise, and those that are 'confident' succession will occur. Recognising this difference between the two groups is an important finding, with previous methods such as the *FARMTRANSFERS* survey conflating the two groups; these nuanced findings contribute to a more accurate understanding of farm succession status and availability of a future generation of farmers. In comparison to the importance of gender to successor identification evident in incumbent farmers' narratives (Section 6.1.1.1), this chapter revealed a significant shift in the importance of gender to successor identification, with a number of farmers' daughters identified as potential successors and a general shift in attitude amongst other farmers. This further strengthens Silvasti's (2012) suggestion that the traditional gendered division in succession is no longer as relevant.

In line with wider literature on succession, this chapter documented a clear 'succession effect', with identification of a successor resulting in a range of progressive behaviours, including acquisition of additional land, increased stocking levels, changing type of stock. Whilst previous research into the so called succession effect simply attributed the effect to the successor providing both the means and incentive for changes, analysis here has revealed that, as a result of the wider societal shift and the

subsequent emphasis on autonomy and individuality, it has emerged as a common tactic used by incumbent farmers to maintain their potential successors' interest in the farm and working on the farm, rather than pursuing the other options increasingly open to them. Having established the impact of successor identification on the farm, the influence of the successor themselves whilst working on the farm was then explored. Potential successors had typically introduced and encouraged new technologies, machinery and techniques to the farm business, often learnt on agricultural courses at local colleges. In addition, analysis revealed the benefit of 'agriculturally relevant' courses, such as accountancy and business courses to the trajectory of the farm. Although the *exact* contours of the emerging food security agenda are unknown, primarily because the science remains too immature (Lobley and Winter, 2009), with prescriptions for change ranging from the "benignly scientific and technocratic to the radical and transformative" (Fish *et al*, 2013: 28), it *will* require holistic changes to agricultural practice (Sage, 2012); changes that, analysis here suggests, successor farms will have the incentive, motivation and means to make. Or as Lobley *et al* (2010: 60) assert, in responding to the 'challenges of the future', the "industry as a whole can derive benefit from the so-called 'succession effect'".

Having established the benefit of successor identification, both in terms of the succession and successor effect, the chapter focused on the ways in which managerial control is being transferred between the generations. Unlike previous conceptualisations of the process, which identified varying 'arrangements' in place for transfer (see Gasson and Errington, 1993), analysis revealed how this understanding was no longer an accurate representation of the ways in which managerial control is being transferred between generations. Instead, potential successors were found to be working *alongside* the farmer on the same holding, with differences found in the way in the speed and ease at which managerial control was being transferred. Analysis identified two broad ways in which managerial control was being transferred between the generations, attributing differences to the shift in emphasis from discipline to expressivity and the enduring process of individualisation (Beck, 1994).

Firstly, although there were notable and interesting exceptions, *Conservative Potential Successors*, born in the 1960s and 1970s, a period in which upbringing was predicated on 'family farm thinking', were raised to become farmers, all returned to the farm immediately after compulsory education or agricultural training. In line with previous conceptualisations of managerial transfer (e.g. Gasson and Errington, 1993; Errington, 2002; Lobley *et al*, 2010), *Conservative Potential Successors* were ascending a clear ladder of increasing responsibility, with little involvement in 'higher rung' or managerial tasks. Analysis revealed how incumbent farmers in this group were reluctant to relinquish managerial control, particularly of the financial aspects of farm management, and simultaneously revealed a desire amongst potential successors to keep incumbent farmers happy and feeling included, rendering them largely unable to introduce their own ideas into the business. Furthermore, analysis

highlighted how farmers on *Conservative* farmers had failed to engage with any succession and/or estate planning, with farmers in their 70s and 80s having little more than ‘a rough idea’ about the handover of the farm business assets.

In contrast, there was no clear linear pattern to the transfer of managerial control amongst *Progressive Potential Successors*, many of whom had significant input into typically ‘higher rung’ managerial tasks, including farm finances; the chapter presented the *Succession Matrix* as a way of conceptualising this emergent type of transfer. Born in the 1980s and 1990s, analysis attributed the progression of this group to their upbringing and subsequent experiences, having, unlike the older group, been encouraged to find for themselves what they want to do and, critically, try other things before deciding to return to the farm. Having pursued what the analysis terms a ‘short-term diversion’, including for example, University and non-agricultural jobs, analysis reveals how in recognition of their potential successors’ employability they are delegating a range of higher rung responsibilities to ensure their potential successors remain active, challenged and interested. Furthermore, *Progressive Potential Successors*’ wider experiences were not only creating capable and confident potential successors, able to challenge incumbent farmers in order to introduce new ideas and techniques into the farm business, but they were also inadvertently connecting farmers to these non-farming domains, encouraging their respective farmers to start thinking, planning and looking forward to what they can do with their retirement. This kind of transfer has the potential to speed up the overall transfer of managerial control, with welcome implications for farmer experiences of retirement and the average age of farmers, and may make an interesting avenue for future research as farmers’ retirement plans begin to materialise.

In the absence of empirical data from the family farming literature, this chapter has utilised wider family business data to highlight, *Conservative Potential Successors*’ lack of insight into (some of) the ‘inner workings of the farm business’ and likely lack of opportunity to obtain the necessary experience and skills prior to handover, as a concern in the context of the need to exploit spare capacity in farming (Potter, 2009). In its most basic sense, their likely requirement for a period in which to ‘get to grips’ with the ‘inner workings of the farm’, has potential to detract from other elements such as farm productivity, environmental management, animal welfare and so on, or simply result in costly errors. Furthermore, given that “agro-food systems will need to *adapt* in quite *fundamental ways* to avoid impending crisis” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 40, emphasis added), *Conservative Potential Successors*’ continual desire to include and satisfy incumbent farmers in farm decision making, represents a threat to the industry’s propensity to adopt new and best practice approaches both during, and post-handover.

This chapter adduces that, in the context of the litany of demands and challenges associated with the food security agenda, benefit can be derived from *Progressive* transfer of managerial control, with

potential successors' experiences during 'short-term diversions' a key facet conducive with benefits such as adequate levels of preparation, an ability to challenge the incumbent, and thus introduce new approaches and post-handover successor confidence and ability.

Although further longitudinal work is needed to verify and explore the longer-term implications of these effects, the chapter suggests that multiplied up, successor identification, and the mode of transfer of managerial control and their subsequent impacts on farm business trajectory and successor aptitude, have the potential to shape the industry's ability to deliver food security objectives and thus, these processes and their potential implications need to be a central consideration in creation, implementation and delivery of wider food security policy. As Lobley *et al* (2010: 61) assert and is reinforced in this chapter, "in challenging times, these two 'effects' are clearly in the interests of efficient farming for the business and the country, providing perhaps the best model for succession".

This chapter has revealed how the wider societal shift from a 'society of duty' to a 'market place of opportunity' is impacting on potential successor upbringing and subsequently experiences of the transfer of managerial control, with *Younger Potential Successors* experiencing a very different upbringing, to their older counterparts, predicated on freedom to choose what they want to do. In demonstrating this shift and its implications for potential successor upbringing, it raises questions over our understanding of potential successors' contemporary experiences' of 'becoming' farmers and their motivations for farming, and the ongoing applicability of the experiences of incumbent farmers, who had typically followed a set path, governed by expectation and tradition, (see Chapter 2). The implications of these changes on current potential successors' experiences of 'becoming' farmers and consequent motivations for farming are explored in the following chapter.

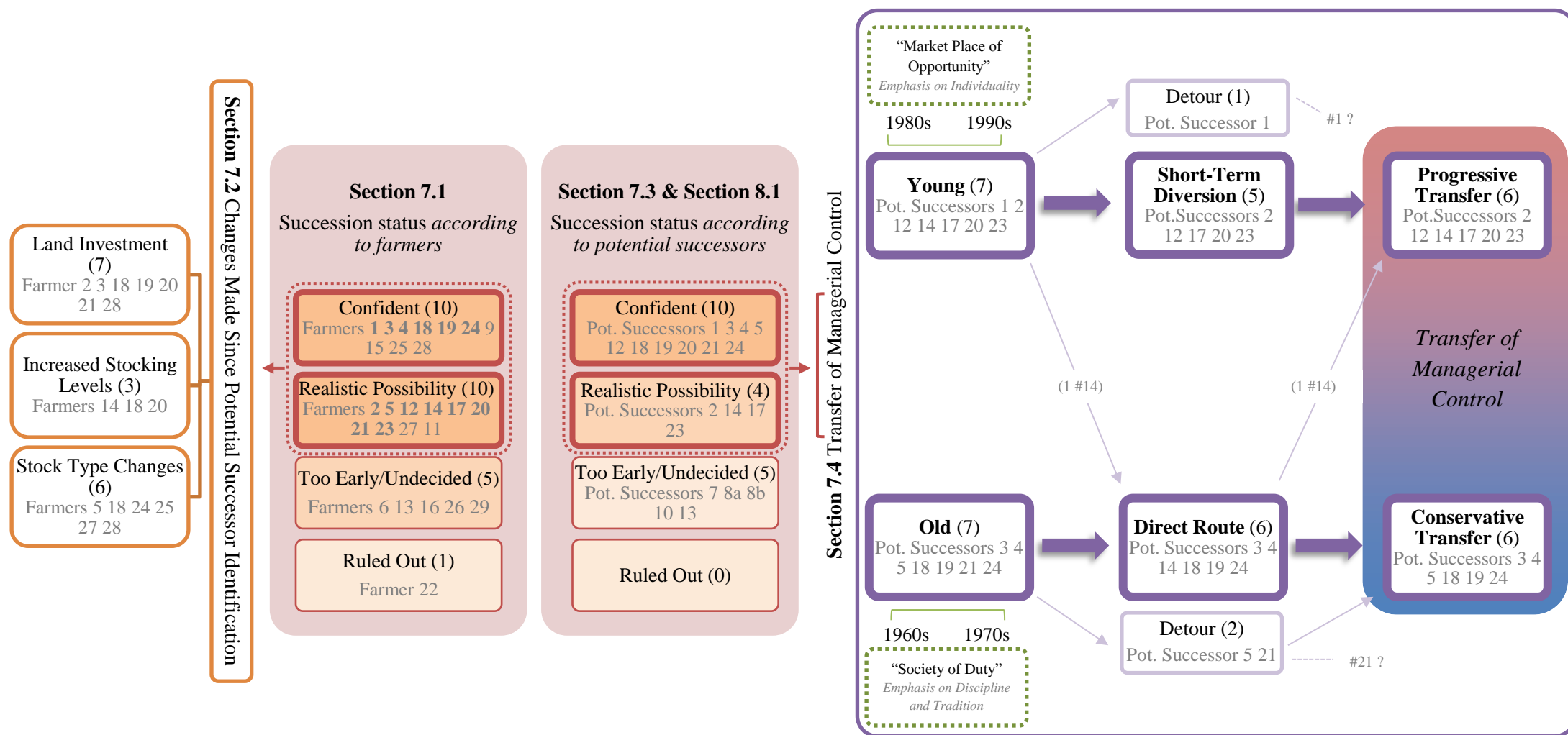


Figure 7.3 Sections 7.1 ‘Succession Status’, 7.2 ‘The Succession Effect’, 7.3 ‘The Successor Effect’, 8.1 ‘Succession Status – According to Potential Successors’ and 7.4 ‘Transfer of Managerial Control’ – Diagram for Analysis Typologies

Chapter Eight: Potential Successors: Intentions, Motivations and Understandings

8.0 Introduction

Whilst there is merit in exploring farmers' understanding of their succession status and their accompanying understandings of the prospects of the industry, which undoubtedly contributes to the need to understand how the emergent food security agenda is being "understood and interpreted against the lived realities of farming" (Fish *et al*, 2013: 40), the preceding literature review highlighted the lack of engagement with the potential successor, and argued for the need to give the potential successor a voice to strengthen our understanding of farms' succession status in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes and the reasons behind this.

To rectify the tendency of the associated research "to focus on adult reflections on both their own childhood and as spokesperson for the experiences of their children" (Riley, 2009: 247), which has left the potential successor largely voiceless, it is necessary to explore their intentions and corresponding motivations, in their *own* words.

8.1 Succession Status

Encouragingly, *all* of the potential successors of 'confident' farmers interviewed (see Section 7.1) expressed corresponding levels of confidence in their intention to succeed to the farm (6/6). However, there was a notable discrepancy between 'realistically hopeful' farmers (8), who saw succession as a strong possibility but also expressed some doubt about whether succession would occur, and the corresponding commitment of their potential successor (see Figure 7.3, p.264 for a diagrammatic summary of farm succession status according to potential successors). Although a number of their potential successors (4) expressed similar levels of doubt, an equal number of corresponding potential successors (4) were, in contrast to their respective fathers and grandfathers, decidedly confident in their long term commitment to the farm; these discrepancies are demonstrated in Table 8.1, below.

Table 8.1

Succession status: farmers' and corresponding potential successors' views

	Farmers' Views: How likely is succession?	Potential Successors' Views: How likely is succession?
Farm 14	Succession is a possibility	Succession is a possibility
	[Do you consider yourself to have a next generation on the farm here?] Yes, yes, that's what we're certainly aiming for [Okay] [...] But you know it's got to be financially possible, he's gotta be able to make a reasonable amount ... enable him to have a good standard of living, have a reasonable lifestyle	Yeah that's the plan [...] But as I said, it's complicated [Okay ... can I ask how?] Well, Granddad's gotta have enough money to live off, my um, well we've gotta know what my uncle wants to do ... whether he wants to come back, so yeah, it's the plan ... but who knows
Farm 2	Succession is a possibility	Succession is a possibility
	I've got a [potential] successor, but whether that succession takes place is up in the air	I'm happy how it is now, but there is you know, because I've got my degree [...], I'd like to make use of it, but um, I'm sort of like got my options open, if something turns up that I fancy, I may go off and give it a go, it's not like I'm definitely like staying here [...] Um, I reckon so, yeah [...] we haven't really had that conversation, I'd like to be
Farm 23	Succession is a possibility	Succession is a possibility
	[Okay, and thinking about the farm now [...] do you think, do you consider yourself to have a next generation in the farm? I mean a successor or perhaps successors?] Yes, yes, <i>it's looking that way</i>	I think I'll stay farming in some sort, all the way through, providing um, providing I can make money out of it
Farm 17	Succession is a possibility	Succession is a (stronger) possibility (than the farmer thought)
	We got two daughters, one obviously wants to go farming, but that don't necessarily mean that, I mean she could go off and get married, I don't know, there's still a bit of a question mark, but her loves milking	[So, you've kind of suggested you are thinking about coming back to the farm in the future, so if you had to sort of say, 100 per cent being definite and 0 per cent, where would you kind of put yourself?] I would, well, I would definitely say nearer 100 per cent [...] in terms of per cent I think you know, 90 ... 80 or 90, you know, high ...
Farm 5	Succession is a possibility	Confident in succession
	Hopefully, it will be my son	<i>His plans to take on the farm were implicit throughout</i>
Farm 12	Succession is a possibility	Confident in succession
	[Do you consider that you have a next generation here?] Well yeah ... that's the plan, certainly	Yeah that's what I'd like to happen
Farm 20	Succession is a possibility	Confident in succession
	[So do you sort of consider, you know that your daughter's gonna continue in farming?] <i>Well yeah, I hope so</i>	I could have gone to Uni, I could have gone into anything really ... um, and I wanna go farming
Farm 21	Succession is a possibility	Confident in succession
	[Do you consider yourselves to have a next generation that will farm here?] We would like to think so	[Okay, so you don't see you know the farm kind of, you don't see you selling up or you know, leaving here ...?] No [...] At very worst in the short term we might reduce the business right down and sow it to grass, change our business, but ultimately we don't intend on losing the commodity of the farm and the main motivation for that, is the kids, our kids

8.1.1 Reasons for this Discrepancy

The (4) farmers who, unlike their potential successors who were confident in succession, believed succession was only a ‘realistic possibility’ had potential successors who had either pursued a short-term diversion or had pursued or were pursuing a full professional detour (see Chapter 7, Sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.4). As previously proposed, involvement in a short-term diversionary activity or professional detour means the potential successor returns to the farm with various connections and experiences, and is therefore employable beyond farming. This instils a comprehensible degree of doubt amongst their respective farmers. Farmer 21’s potential successor was currently pursuing a full professional detour. Although his son was confident he would return to the farm in some capacity, Farmer 21 was naturally doubtful, with his son currently enjoying his current non-agricultural role.

8.1.2 Implications for the ‘Succession Crisis Debate’

Whilst farmers’ understanding of their succession status went some way to dismissing the (albeit colloquially depicted) ‘crisis in succession’ (Chapter 7, Section 7.1), as highlighted in the review of the previous literature into intergenerational farm transfer (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1.4), understanding of farm succession status has been debilitated by the absence of the potential successor from associated data collection. Therefore, the inclusion of the potential successors’ understandings and intentions offered here represent an important contribution to our wider understanding of the industry’s status. As above, potential successors’ narratives corroborate and even further dismiss the crisis and, furthermore, help depict a general picture of relative positivity amongst potential successors in the industry. For example, when asked about her feelings about the state of the industry, Potential Successor 17 suggested:

I think college has been a really positive experience, and there’s loads of us there that wanna go into farming. And I’m involved with the Young Farmers, and the people I’ve met through college and Young Farmers, so many people, young people that really want to farm, like people that are really passionate about farming (Potential Successor 17)

8.1.3 Other Notable Cases

Overall, 10 out of the 19 potential successors interviewed, were confident that they would eventually succeed to the farm and a further 4 believed it was a realistic possibility.

There were a further 5 potential successors interviewed for whom it was either too early for them to have decided on their future involvement in the farm, were generally just undecided or their physical ability to farm in the future was dubious. As defined in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.1), these

potential successors were, simply, by virtue of a kin relationship with the farmer, a *possible successor*. Critically, they had not graduated through the *Possible-Prospective Transition* and were not (yet) collectively recognised as someone who will, in time, succeed to the farm.

Aged just 18 and hoping to go away to University after her A-levels, Potential Successor 8a had no plans to immediately return to the farm:

[And you're doing your A-Levels at the moment?] Yep [And then off to Uni?] Yep, that's the plan, if I get the grades, but fingers crossed, it's all going to plan at the moment [Okay, so in terms of your future career, well ... so you don't have the intention of maybe returning to the farm immediately?] No, not immediately anyway (Potential Successor 8a)

Similarly, her cousin, aged 20, who was currently doing a degree in a non-agricultural subject, had no plans to immediately return to the farm.

[Do you see yourself farming in the future?] Probably not anytime soon (Potential Successor 8b)

Potential Successor 10 provided an interesting example. Aged 18, he was clearly passionate about farming and wanted to succeed to the home farm, but his parents, particularly his father, were keen for him to pursue something else. Still in full-time education, studying for an engineering diploma at the time of the interview, his future involvement in the family farm was far more 'up in the air', compared with those for whom their future career plans were a realistic possibility.

[Okay ... so have you ever experienced any pressure from anyone in your family to go into farming?] No, the complete opposite ... I've never had any encouragement to do it ... it's literally just something in me, that's made me wanna do it, I can't explain it ... Dad has never wanted me farming really (Potential Successor 10)

[So you're doing a BTEC in engineering, is that with a view to go into engineering?] No, not at all, it's what my parents wanted me to do so I could have something to fall back on [Okay] But I wanna go into dairy farming [Okay, so it's a bit of a backup plan?] Yeah exactly like that [...] I've got that to fall back on [Okay, so then the plan being after the BTEC finishes, you'll be working on Mum and Dad's farm?] Well, ideally I'd like to take over the farm [Okay] But *I don't know if it's gonna happen* ... my parents have never been keen on me farming ... so yeah I'm not sure really ... if I do, it certainly won't be any time soon (Potential Successor 10)

Potential Successor 7 was a particularly unusual case. He recalled having worked alongside his Dad, and although no plans were formally in place or agreed, it was ‘with a view to continuing’ into farming.

My Dad took it on and his brothers and sisters went other ways, and I left school, I started working for Dad, with the view to continuing ... um we did dairy farming (Potential Successor 7)

However, unfortunately, his father passed away when Potential Successor 7 was in his late teens.

I worked ... was the one who worked there, um ... it’s one of those things, in hindsight we should have ... well maybe I should’ve stayed there, but I think Mum was a bit worried that I’d have taken on the farm at 18, you know ... and that was a huge worry, that that wasn’t the right age for me ... you know, I would have been too tied if you know what I mean (Potential Successor 7)

Now in his early thirties the farm remains in the family, farmed by his brother-in-law and he has a small amount of land which he inherited from his father, which he pursues as a hobby.

It’s just a bit of a hobby really ... basically I’m self-employed, and I do different bits ... I always used to work on, doing farm work for different people, but lately, well my father-in-law’s a builder, so do a few days a week with him, and then I do some relief milking (Potential Successor 7)

Yes and no, like I said at the moment with a young family, it's a no brainer to be doing what I'm doing and I have to do what I do to pay the bills, you know? But I'd like to think, well I'd like to go back to it, if it allowed me to support this kind of lifestyle ... and at the moment it really doesn't ... but who knows really ... never say never ... but it's unlikely (Potential Successor 7)

With the option of farming his father’s land or farming the home farm, Potential Successor 7 is ‘undecided’, although his situation is unusual and provides a useful example of how farm families are diverse and do not always lend themselves to categorisation.

Similarly, whilst Potential Successor 13 was *incredibly* enthusiastic about continuing on the family farm, a long-term health problem prevented them from being able to confidently predict their level of future involvement.

I’m as keen as mustard but it’s just, well time will tell, like it is, to whether I can actually do it, I’m hopeful that I’m gonna be strong enough and um, well enough to

do it [So you're mad keen on farming then?] Yep definitely, definitely (Potential Successor 13)

8.2 Potential Successors Motivations

The following discussion draws on the narratives of *all* 19 potential successors interviewed to explore potential successors' motivations for farming (or what their motivations would be if they decided to eventually farm, in the case of Potential Successors 7, 8a, 8b, 10 and 13). Potential successors were divided into two broad groups according to their motivations, which broadly matched the earlier typology (see Section 7.3.3); these groups are discussed in turn below (see Figure 7.3, p.264 for a diagrammatic summary of the potential successors' motivations).

8.3 Older Potential Successors' Motivations

"It's realising what is in your heart and your soul" (Potential Successor 5)

Like farmers who had succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, who as discussed at the beginning of this analysis, were socialised to 'become the farmer', following a predefined path into farming (marked by an inability to explain why they wanted to farm, a desire to continue for previous generations and a feeling of not knowing anything else and therefore not being able to do anything else), a number of potential successors described a similar experience (see Figure 7.3, p.264).

8.3.1 Born to be Farmers

When asked about why they wanted to farm, these potential successors (8) seldom listed any intrinsic motivations. Instead, they situated their desire to succeed to the farm within the wider 'story' of their families' time on the farm or in farming. Interestingly, these potential successors were generally significantly older than the other potential successors interviewed, having been born in the 1960s and 1970s. As established in more detail elsewhere in this discussion, the upbringing of potential successors born in the 1960s and 1970s would have been predicated on communal meanings and ascribed roles, where the family as a whole took precedence over the individual (Brandth and Overrein, 2013) (see Section 4.2 for a detailed description of the process of individualisation). More specifically, the continuity and survival of the farm was more important than the rights of the individual (Silvasti, 2012). This desire to secure the continuity of the family on the farm meant parents would "try to socialize one of their sons to be the successor and other children, especially daughters, are brought up to leave the farm" (Silvasti, 2012: 17)

As was the case with farmers who had succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, all of these potential successors were male, and all but one was the oldest son. Similarly, Villa (1999: 333)

recognised amongst older generation farmers interviewed, “to be the oldest boy in a farm family made it *natural* and *not questioned* to take over the farm”.

It’s just how it works, passing to the son, or the eldest son [...] Well, you wanna pass it on [...] It’s what has always happened, the son works on the farm and then takes it over (Potential Successor 19)

By virtue of their gender and birth order, these potential successors were identified as the potential successor from an early age and like the farmers who succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, were thus subject to a very specific set of boundaries growing up; as Silvasti (2012: 24) identifies “the boundaries set for the children of the family during socialization differ, because the parents need one of them to stay on the farm”.

I think, if like me, you’ve grown up on a farm, you don’t know any different, it’s your lifestyle and you don’t, and *you haven’t known much else so you carry on in farming* [Yeah of course] And I don’t mean that in a negative way, I mean, I mean you get used to working outside and doing your own thing (Potential Successor 4)

Correspondingly, potential successors in this group appeared to have been extensively involved in the farm from an early age, a process which Brandth and Overrein (2012) highlight as a key element of farmer socialisation.

Ashley was always machinery minded, he used to love the machinery, he just wasn’t interested, well not as interested in the farm, whereas my son, right from 8, he was a stock boy ... he ... when my husband and I, before foot and mouth came along, we always milked and my husband used to be on quite a few committees and he would go off and I’d be milking ... and sometimes I’d think, ‘God, which calf goes with which calf’ and I’d asked my son and he would know ... ‘Mum, it’s that one’ ... and he’d know for sure (Farmer 18’s wife)

Fischer and Burton (2014: 11) recognise that it is through this kind of involvement “that initially established successor identities become practically affirmed, i.e. transformed from merely corresponding to ideal-type successor aspects (e.g. maleness and interest), towards [...] identities corresponding to the ability and the motivation”. As previously suggested, and remains applicable for potential successors in this group, formation of a vocational identity or farmer identity during primary socialisation, a sequence unique to the farming community, means the vocational identity is entwined with the emotionally charged relationships inherent to primary socialisation. Thus the ‘farmer identity’ of these potential successors is “so much more firmly entrenched in consciousness than worlds internalized by secondary socialisations” (Berger and Luckman, 1966:

134); to not choose farming would be to abandon a firmly entrenched aspect of ones' identity and being.

Even where Potential Successor 24 described his enjoyment of working outside, the way he described his enjoyment implied he had grown to love it as a result of his involvement in the farm during his upbringing:

Quite happy to be out doing it, grew up doing it, quite happy to be out there (Potential Successor 24)

Having pursued an off-farm career for several decades before returning to the farm, Potential Successor 5 *provides a good example of the strength of early-established vocational identity, that was simply too hard for him to pull away from.* Throughout the interview, Potential Successor 5 made a number of references to his involvement in the farm and farming.

I was, *always*, I *always* worked on the farm during school holidays, and any spare time after school [...] I often worked with my grandfather [...] spreading fertilizer or something like that [...] doing ditches together, or tending sheep or whatever (Potential Successor 5)

I'd *always* worked on the farm [...] and was important manpower for the farm from a young age (Potential Successor 5)

I came home on the farm, because um, all of a sudden, um, my father, was one man down, and he was doing other things, politically, with the NFU and the Conservative association, so wasn't here all the time at that, at that time, um and so I came home at the end of 1980 and [...] *I farmed, which was what I knew how to do* (Potential Successor 5)

Although initially he continued to work on the farm having met his wife, he recalled soon asking his father for a regular wage. When his father was dubious to grant this request, Potential Successor 5, left the family farm to pursue an alternative career that enabled him to support his own family.

You'll hear with plenty of interviews, I didn't have a wage, and I don't know how we did do it, every now and again I would get a cheque sort of thing, I was never paid regularly or never on a wage [...] now when I got married, I did ask that we needed to formalise something, and I was put on um, um, a sort of a farm worker's wage [I suppose your priorities change, you had a wife and a step-child] Yes, and a step-child to support. Yes, that's exactly right. And quite honestly, that wasn't enough and I

couldn't see that, that, well there was discussion between my father and I that the farm wouldn't support two families (Potential Successor 5)

Although he worked hard to establish a successful non-agricultural career, his time away from the farm was clearly difficult for him.

[The farm's] where I felt at home, and that my, you know, my, I work very well alone, um and [long pause] I had had to, um, not make compromises, in my other career, I'd had to, it didn't come naturally, I worked very hard to make it happen and I got...um...just rewards for doing that, but it wasn't in my heart [Okay] It wasn't what came naturally. I could do it. I'd been taught. I could learn. And, and I did it, and I got, was given, was um, was earning a good living out of it, but it's that, it's that, um, soul thing again, it wasn't feeding my soul, I didn't get moments where I could just marvel, which I can now, almost every day, on, you know (Potential Successor 5)

Whilst out of (financial) necessity he had to leave the farm, the pull back to what he described as 'what he knew how to do' and 'what came naturally', a product of his early and extensive involvement in the farm, ultimately proved too hard to disregard and is testament to the strength of the identity he, and other potential successors in this group, developed from an early age.

Potential successors in this group justified their (anticipated) entry into farming by situating their position in the historical context of the farm. This was commonly expressed by the need or responsibility to continue because of their family's connection to the farm. Just as farmers from *Established Family Farms* experienced a "deep attachment to the family story" (Price, 2010: 88), potential successors in this group situated their intention to farm in the context of their family's time on the land and this was an obvious motivation for them.

[Were you the only possible successor?] Well, it was just me and two sisters [Okay and they ... none of them expressed an interest in farming?] No, not at all, no [Why do you think that was the case?] Whether they just saw me doing it ... and just *expected* that's what'll happen (Potential Successor 24)

It's what's meant to happen, it being passed through the family [Okay, why is it that way though?] Well, each generation works hard for the next I suppose ... you just wanna keep it going (Potential Successor 4)

[How do you feel about being the fourth generation here then?] Yeah it's a nice feeling [...] Yeah ... you'll find out when you meet my parents, um, especially my mother, they are absolute ... the farm means everything to them [Why are they so

attached to the farm?'] It's pride ... it's been in the family a long time ... and I guess, when you said about pressure, yes I guess I did feel it in a way, because I knew how much it meant to them really ... for me to carry it on (Potential Successor 18)

Potential successors in this group typically attributed their identification as the potential successor as a kind of family tradition, a notion that reaffirms the existence of a predefined path for these participants, set for them from as early as the moment they were born.

[So, yeah, from the records I've looked at the farm here, the Farm was owned by a Mr A Brown] Yeah that would have been my great-grandfather, I think, yeah [Okay, and what's your knowledge of how the farm has passed down, like through the family?] Well, I think it just went from him, to my grandfather, to my father [...] [And why do you think it passed down that way? Why has it stayed in the family, for like however many generations?] *It's just how it works, passing to the son, or the eldest son* (Potential Successor 19)

Potential Successor 4's father reinforced this point.

I wouldn't have been unhappy if my son had chosen to do something else but there is an expectation that the son will come back and farm, I think that's the case in any generation, whether that materialises is another matter but it is at the back of most people's minds ... it is important (Farmer 4)

Although in the younger cohort, as discussed above, Potential Successor 14 had been thrust into the role of the potential successor after his uncle left the home farm. For this reason, his identification as the potential successor meant his experiences and motivations are more akin to the farmers in this older group; particularly his desire to carry on the farm and failure to consider anything else.

I never wanted to do anything different ... I've not really thought about why really ... it's nice to carry it on isn't it, yeah it's nice (Potential Successor 14)

As Gill (2013) and Riley (2009) identified amongst farmers and potential successors respectively, the connection of potential successors in this group had a strong temporal element, not just relating to the past, but also the future. In Potential Successor 5's case, these feelings were so strong, they caused him to return to the farm after a lengthy professional detour outside of farming.

There is a huge pull back to the farm, it's difficult to explain ... it's who I am, it always has been even, even before I was born ... even when I moved away and I felt, I mean I still feel, the need to kind of take that forward (Potential Successor 5)

Villa (1999: 333) observed a similar desire amongst older generation farmers in her research, whose “understanding and commitment to the farm was embedded in the meaning of oneself as bringing farming and family history one step further, or of continuing something their forefathers had started”. Just like farmers who had succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, the decisions of these potential successors “are made through their understanding of the past and where they fit into the historical and social fabric of their community and farm” (Gill, 2013: 77). A particularly poignant example of the influence of the ‘demands of the past’, as Gill (2013) describes it, is Potential Successor 5’s intense description of his relationship with his grandfather.

There’s a huge pull back to the fact that, um, eh, a lot of it is to do with my relationship with my grandfather, without a doubt, without.. a.. doubt.. Um, I would, I would, I would do anything for that man, I had a huge amount of respect for his ability as a stockman, the way he went about managing, his, um, his um, his animals, and a deep love and affection for him and I [long pause] um, um.... It was important to me (Potential Successor 5)

As concluded in the exploration of farmers’ entry into farming (see Section 6.1), socialisation of children into the role of ‘the farmer’ is inherently self-sustaining, not requiring parents to explicitly demand children continue in farming.

[Do you think there is any expectation on the next generation, you know, generally speaking?] Well, yeah there is and there isn’t ... [In what way?] Well, I don’t think my Dad ever said to me, ‘you *will* take over the farm’ [laughs] ... but I knew he’d have wanted me to, and as I said, I’d grown up not really knowing anything else, so it kind of just happens (Potential Successor 4)

[Did you ever experience any pressure to farm after your brother decided otherwise?]
Not explicitly (Potential Successor 18)

Instead, potential successors in this group recalled how farming was all they ever planned to do, in the absence of knowing an alternative.

I wasn’t planning on doing anything else (Potential Successor 24)

I think at the bottom end of things I thought, well I was always going to come back here (Potential Successor 4)

[Yeah perhaps, and what was it about farming, well what was it that made you farm then?] [laughs] I don’t know really, just happened basically (Potential Successor 3)

Although the limits imposed on these potential successors during socialisation meant they ultimately had little or no choice other than farming, the subtlety of this subordination meant they *felt* they were actively choosing to farm. As Silvasti (2012: 26) observes, “choosing what you already have, does not make the *choice* any more unreal”.

[Okay, and you said you were the only child, did that kind of put any negative pressure on you to decide to farm or ... you know, did you ever feel you had to farm or?] Not really, I don't know, 'cause *I always wanted to do it* (Potential Successor 4)

Whilst wider historical motivations dominated these potential successors' narratives, some intrinsic motivations were sporadically offered.

You got like, well, it's quite, you got a lot of freedom ... So no boss, sort of telling you, you need to be in the office 9-5 (Potential Successor 19)

I do like the outdoor life ... I couldn't do an indoor job, I'm an outdoor person [...] I like to ... I like to buy livestock that I know I can sell the next day for more money or the same money ... I don't like buying um ... I'm always very conscious of what I'm buying basically ... I enjoy going to market (Potential Successor 18)

His wife added:

It's all about the animals and the stock (Potential Successor 18's wife)

8.3.2 Older Potential Successors and the Influence of the Renaissance in Agriculture

As previously proposed, despite important headway made by Fish *et al* (2013: 40) in their consideration of how food security “agendas are being understood by farming publics”, which drew on the understandings of various members of the farming community, including potential successors, there remains a lack of explicit engagement with the potential successor, when, given the incipency of the agenda, they are an incredibly significant stakeholder in the manifestation of food security agendas.

However, critically and in stark contrast to younger potential successors (see Section 8.4.5), *none* of the older cohort referred to the prospects of the industry in their motivations to farm, when asked what is motivating them to farm.

To explore whether the renaissance in agriculture, driven by “continuing population growth and expected shifts from low to medium (and high) incomes of increasing proportions of the population in Brazil, India and China”, as well as “demands for the provision of a raft of other goods and services also increasing” (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012: 234) was playing *any*

part in their decision to farm, potential successors were given a series of similar statements²¹ about the supposed renewed position of the industry as a result of the emergent food security discourse. They were asked how they felt about the statements. Whilst the approach sought to explore reactions to the above-mentioned *pre-given* claims, it is important to note that potential successors responded to these claims with little corresponding information on the topic. The following narratives are responses to the statements.

Firstly, it is important to state that *Older Potential Successors* agreed strongly with the overarching sentiment of the statements; either agreeing that the industry's standing *had* improved, or that they anticipated it *would* in the context of food security discourse.

Yeah, I think it could be a good time for farming, in general (Potential Successor 5)

There's that murmuring and potential (Potential Successor 21)

I used to think that I'd never encourage my children into farming [...] Yeah, I used to think I wouldn't want 'em going into farming but I think now, well now we'd love it if they would ... now I think I've changed my mind (Potential Successor 24)

Some potential successors from this group expressed their agreement by comparing the current perception of and interest in the industry to what it had been in the past. Farmer 4 gave a striking example of his childhood reluctance to tell classmates he was from a farming family, compared to his own sons' pride in the farm and their identity as farm children, today.

Well, it seems, well people are a little more aware of what's going on now, I think it's certainly in the media spotlight a lot more, and people are, yes, yes ... [...] There's certainly more interest in farming, people interested in it [And in terms of how you feel farmers are perceived by the public, do you think that's um, well how do you feel farmers are currently perceived? Um, does it differ to any other period of time or ... um, do you see it changing?] Well, I think it's beginning to pick up actually, you know there were points when I was much younger and I remember I wouldn't tell people at school I lived on a farm and was a farmer's son and what have you ... um, so yeah it's certainly picking up, I think my boys love saying they live here and they have friends over and they feed the animals and that ... yeah I think it's changed a lot (Potential Successor 4)

Potential Successor 3 attributed this changing level of interest to the emerging public interest in where their food is coming from.

²¹ These can be found in Appendix 8

Nowadays, now farmers have got, well I think they've got a better name, um, than 20 years ago, 20, 30 years ago ... yeah we have [What was it at that time that the public didn't like about farmers? What gave them a bad name?] Well, I don't know really, um, I suppose, well now there's so many standards that you have to abide by, people, the public, they were unsure about lots of things, about the welfare, the environmental impacts and about actually the ... what was going into the food, you know, the chemicals that were going into the food, and what was going into it all ... well I think nowadays people are starting to *appreciate* what farmers do, and what we have to do to produce the food they eat (Potential Successor 3)

But I think farmers do have a better, have got a better name, they have definitely got a better name nowadays, and are more acceptable nowadays [A better reputation?] Yeah reputation now than they did, for sure ... I think it might sway youngsters to come into it, and it's seen so much on television, and people can look at it, and think you know, it's more acceptable and it's a, you know, like they say, it's more popular nowadays [...] you can just be a bit more proud of what you do compared with a little while back (Potential Successor 3)

People are a little more *aware* of what's going on now, I think it's certainly in the media spotlight a lot more [...] there's certainly more interest in farming, people interested in it (Potential Successor 4)

Attitude changes ... I mean, there's much more certainty now than five, ten years ago ... people *appreciate* us a bit more now (Potential Successor 21)

Although, as the wealth of positive comments demonstrates, *Older Potential Successors* felt farming as an industry was increasingly well positioned, they explicitly insisted this had *no bearing* on their plans to succeed to the family farm. Instead, they zealously reiterated the importance of farming being 'what they were meant to do'.

[What I'm trying to get at, is that this is being written about a lot, this new agenda, this renaissance in agriculture, but no one's engaging with how [...] potential successors are talking about it, so it's all well and good talking about this so called 'renaissance' but how are farmers engaging with it on the ground ...] That's a really good point, because people won't be talking about it, around here, but they will be interested in this idea [So you say, farmers around here won't be talking about it, what do you mean by that?] [...] It's personal; it's not going to be about these big academic ideas for these families, it's personal. So I don't think they'll be that you know, attuned or whatever. [...] It is something that everyone is aware of, definitely. I

don't think you can get away from it really, but I'd have come back to the farm regardless. It's personal, it's in your soul, nothing to do with the latest buzz word or media speculation.... um, or media hype, you know, there's one thing one day and another thing the next [That's interesting, what makes you say that?] I don't know much about other people, but you know the literature we get through the door, and the stuff online, you know, the news, it's everywhere, but even if farming was going to die a death tomorrow, I'd still be here, doing what I do, because as I've said, *it's what I was meant to do* (Potential Successor 5)

Instead, for these potential successors, this shift in public perception and anticipated prospects of the industry were simply understood as 'nice'.

[And you say that you feel public perception of farming and farmers is um, is picking up, do you think that has made your decision to farm easier or ... ?] No, because I think it was still pretty low when, when I made my decision to come back, but um, I don't think it would have ever swayed my decision to farm or not farm, *it's nice* people are taking an interest in it and yeah it seems to be probably, well yeah certainly picking up, which is always *nice* [laughs] (Potential Successor 4)

[Do you think that farmers will begin to be valued more?] Yeah I would reckon so, I've not really thought about it before though [So it's not something your anticipating or, you know it hasn't been a factor in you deciding to farm?] No [What has then?] Well kinda like *the family thing*, you wanna do right by that, and also I just enjoy it really, it's a challenge (Potential Successor 19)

[They even describe it as the renaissance in agriculture, how do you feel about that?] Like I said, um, *farming suits me right now* ... I enjoy doing it, it's not really about anything else for me, but whether someone coming up through now ... whether, whether they might feel a bit, feel different, be more ... be more attuned to what's going on ... then ... well, I don't know (Potential Successor 24)

The way in which these *Older Potential Successors* appear to be unaffected by the wider political economic context reaffirms the idea that they have been subordinated to follow the path set out for them; they were simply 'born to be farmers' and the global context, however promising, is likely to remain largely irrelevant to them.

[Is someone in your position [...] taking on the family farm, has this idea that farming is now a bit more highly regarded, has that influenced you?] I don't think so, no. It's *nice*, you know that people are taking an interest but I don't think it's something I've

really considered ... no, it's *nice* but no [...] *you do what you do 'cause it's all you've ever known really* (Potential Successor 3)

8.4 Younger Generation Motivations: A Question of Choice

Unlike the older cohort of potential successors who situated their desire to farm in the wider familial context and were largely unaffected by the potential of the industry in the context of food security discourse, younger potential successors (11) described undergoing a systematic and extensive evaluation of a vast array of motivations (see Figure 8.3, p.302).

As already explored in the preceding discussion, societal shift from an emphasis on discipline to expressivity and individuality, visible from the 1970s onwards, has transformed the upbringing of farm children (Villa, 1999; Silvasti, 2003). No longer constrained by 'farm and family thinking' (Brandth and Overrein, 2013) and even explicitly encouraged to pursue a variety of endeavours before *choosing* whether to farm, the decision to enter farming for these potential successors, unlike their older counterparts, was a much more reflective and calculated process, which has received little academic attention (although Villa (1999) provides important exploratory work).

8.4.1 The 'Decision' to Farm

Perhaps the most striking difference was the way in which potential successors *openly recalled* how they had frankly deliberated about their future on the family farm.

[So, you've kind of suggested you are thinking about coming back to the farm in the future, so if you had to sort of say, 100 per cent being definite and 0 per cent, where would you kind of put yourself?] [...] In terms of per cent I think you know, 90 ... 80 or 90, you know, high (Potential Successor 17)

I think like I've had my fair share of like arguments, and I did have a few doubts about it (Potential Successor 20)

It was always an option, but I think, like Dad encouraged us to go away, go travelling first, see other places, see other things, before we decided ... so I think it was when I came back from travelling, it was what I'd decided to do ... but yeah it was always an option but it wasn't a given, it was a process during which I came to the decision (Potential Successor 23)

I don't feel any pressure, um, Mum's always saying for me to do what I want (Potential Successor 7)

Potential Successor 1, who is currently taking a career diversion, candidly stated that his decision to pursue his current job, as opposed to remain in farming, was solely a *financial decision*, despite enjoying farming.

I think, the reason I'm doing what I'm doing at the moment, is purely financial, you know, it's, it's, it's a means to an end really [...] it's a gratifying job and everything else, but it is, I would prefer to be waking up, going out and working with him [...] financially, you know, yeah we could probably up production and I could probably make a living out of farming, but I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing ... and it is important for us [...] before I go doing anything, we want to be in a position whereby they're done and generating income for us ... and then I will probably, you know, then be in a position, having got my place paid for by and large, to come back into the farm (Potential Successor 1)

Unlike the older cohort of potential successors, who almost exclusively situated their desire to farm within their family's 'story', many of the younger cohort explicitly stipulated that they would need to make a reasonable amount of *profit* from farming.

I think I'll stay farming in some sort, all the way through, providing um, providing I can make money out of it [...] you have to be able to make a living, else it wouldn't justify the hard work ... I will want to be able to have some standard of living, I wouldn't find it hard to walk away from if I couldn't, that's the bottom line (Potential Successor 23)

Obviously I don't wanna make a loss and ideally, I don't wanna break even, I wanna make some profit, 'cause breaking even isn't gonna feed the family (Potential Successor 10)

Everyone's saying about how it's a way of life, as nice as that is, you have got to make a living with it as well (Potential Successor 7)

For these potential successors farming *had* to allow them to *satisfy certain conditions*, conditions often linked to or situated within the context of their wider life experiences. For example, potential successors considered farming as an option in view of their different experiences.

I'm happy how it is now, but [...] because I've got my degree and that, I'd like to make use of it, but um, I'm sort of like got my options open, if something turns up that I fancy, I may go off and give it a go, it's not like I'm definitely like staying here, so I can't say I've reached that point at all yet, really, I'm just still taking it day by day really [...] I enjoy it, I look forward to it, and it's, it's not really a job really, it's

‘cause like doing something I enjoy, looking after the animals and that, and uh, being at home and with Dad and being out, being outside. I don’t think that, well I’ve had office jobs in the past, well working inside and they seemed to drag, where as you can always find something to do [...] your outside and loads of different things, and different jobs each day, and depending on the time of year, so yeah I pretty much enjoy it, it’s pretty good. I’ve had worse jobs [...] (Potential Successor 2)

It’s a different experience for me, deciding to farm, you know I went to college, I did my A-Levels, worked for a bit and now I’m doing a business management diploma but I’m still very optimistic in terms of what I do, I like doing what I do, but I don’t know if it’s the future, if that makes sense, just ‘cause there’s so many other opportunities out there [...] it’s not an easy life, it’s not as easy you know [...] so there’s been a lot of things to consider (Potential Successor 20)

For these potential successors it seems that their range of experiences (see Section 7.3.3 and Table 7.2) have ‘set the bar’ for what they want out of life and their career. As Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012: 216) pertinently assert, “for most career decisions the prudent decision maker will no doubt weigh the terms of the prospective position against expectations and alternatives”. Farmers’ were particularly attuned to the potential influence of their children’s experiences on their decision to farm.

It’s just different, I think it’s just a different world anyway, I think expectations are so much different as well aren’t they, from what you’d get from life, like people see more, like Simon’s already travelled and things like that, I don’t know, but when I left school, your expectations were different, or less I suppose, then what a lot of teenagers are now, aren’t they? (Farmer 2)

My sons, they are always mixing with people that have more time off, have weekends, you know and it is difficult for them (Farmer 23)

These experiences have given potential successors *other* lifestyles, occupations, people and areas to measure their own lives against; something a number of their more senior counterparts (and their fathers and grandfathers) simply lacked; for example, Potential Successor 4, claimed “you don’t know any different, it’s your lifestyle [...] and you haven’t known much else”. Interestingly, Potential Successor 17 attributed her father and grandfather’s apparent attachment to the farm to their investment in the farm and the lifestyle and little else.

[And why do you think the farm has been passed down your family, in that way?]
Well, I think it’s just, well the, especially with sons, you grow up on the farm and that’s what you do, especially, like my Dad, never went to college or University or

anything, so that's what, and they kind of, it's their life, it's their livelihood and they want to do it, and it just gets passed on (Potential Successor 17)

8.4.2 The Prominence of Intrinsic Factors

Unlike their older counterparts who situated their desire farm almost entirely in the context of their family story and their need to keep the family line going, intrinsic factors, particularly working with livestock and seeing livestock do well, were *central* motivations for *Younger Potential Successors* and an integral factor in their motivation.

I enjoy the work, I like being outside, I like the fact that every day you are making a difference to the livestock you look after and that matters (Potential Successor 20)

It's nice to see, it's a pleasure to see your animals do well (Potential Successor 23)

I like the milking, I like calves (Potential Successor 17)

I like working with cows (Potential Successor 7)

Yeah, yeah pretty much I enjoy it, I look forward to it, and it's, it's not really a job really, it's 'cause like doing something I enjoy, looking after the animals and that, and uh, being at home and with Dad and being out, being outside (Potential Successor 2)

I just enjoy doing it, like being out in the countryside, working with the livestock ... and mostly driving the tractors, I'm more of a mechanically minded person than livestock ... I just enjoy doing it (Potential Successor 12)

It's seeing, like the best bit is seeing animals, from when they are born, all the way up to when you sell them at market ... yeah, I know this sounds strange because you are selling 'em for meat and they are gonna die, it's something to take pride in, yeah, when you help a cow or a sheep give birth and then see that grow up, you take pride in that, producing good quality meat, that's what I like the most, the animal side of it ... 'cause we have a few crops and potatoes and that, but we, it's good having a nice harvest and a nice yield, but I think for me, I like seeing the animals and seeing them grow and doing well, like it shows all your hard work (Potential Successor 2)

Interestingly, Potential Successor 1 framed his enjoyment of farming in the context of his current non-agricultural role.

Yeah ... it's interesting, 'cause my career that I have ... is quite intangible in comparison to what Dad does, um, you know, I push paper around, I press buttons [...] ... and it's very intangible [Right] If you work on the farm, you can look back at

the end of the day, you can see you've made some bales of hay [...] or you've calved a cow ... it's very tangible (Potential Successor 1)

8.4.3 The Continued Importance of Family and Tradition

However, whilst many younger potential successors sought to satisfy certain conditions, many *also* expressed the importance of family and tradition. This surprising persistency was also observed by Silvasti (2012: 5) who posits, "in addition to continuous changes, modernization often also includes elements of persistency, even tradition. Thus the reconstruction of the way of life does not inevitably mean destruction of traditional cultural scripts." Similarly, Villa (1999: 333-334) also observed amongst younger farmers interviewed that, "emotional ties with the parental farm *were still considered* when taking over, *but* the interest in farming and the challenge of making it work seemed to be *even more important*".

I think I probably realised, when I was doing other jobs I missed being on the farm, they were quite different to life on the farm, you know ... [What did you miss?] You know just not being outside, you know, I did it and got on with it and I was quite happy, but I really missed the farm. And I think as you get a bit older, not that I'm that old [laughs] you kind of begin to think about the future and things and my family is really important to me, so yeah it kind of just fell into place (Potential Successor 17)

[Okay, yeah that makes sense. So um, has, has the fact that your grandfather, and what would have been your great-grandfather, you know the fact it has passed down, do you feel that's influenced you at all?] Yeah [...] It's not a reason for me to do it as such, like it's not *the* reason [Okay, what kinda part has it played then?] But it's sort of, it is quite nice to carry it on, you have a lot of pride in what you do then, um, I mean it's more than earning a living, it's about your family ... although you do have to make a living (Potential Successor 13)

However, there were also a small number of examples of *entirely* rational thought. For example, Potential Successors 2 and 23 both strongly refuted being influenced by their families' longstanding relationship to farming.

[The fact that your Dad has farmed here, and your grandfather and your Great grandfather, over the road, has that influenced you or do you think it will influence you when you come to decide whether to kind of carry on farming here?] I've never really thought about it ... I'm farming mainly because I enjoy it, really (Potential Successor 2)

[And do you feel influenced at all by the fact that your Dad ... your Dad sort of farmed and his family had farmed and you know, it's passed down the generations or ...] No, I wouldn't, I'd say it's more that I enjoy it (Potential Successor 23)

8.4.4 The Decision to Farm: Qualitative Evaluation

As demonstrated by the preceding narratives, the decision to farm for these *Younger Potential Successors* was a *rational* business-like decision making process, during which they actively contemplated and evaluated the range of options open to them, in view of their experiences and various wider influences. This emphasis mirrors Fishcer and Burton's (2014: 10) observation that "increasingly [...] children develop the ability to more reflexively engage in the internal-external dialectic of identification, accepting, rejecting and modifying others' identifications" i.e. although identified as 'the potential successor', they are not simply accepting it or blindly following it, but are modifying and rejecting elements of it and making it their own. The following narrative from Potential Successor 20 provides a particularly good summary of this critical and vast approach to decision making and is therefore quoted at length.

[Has the fact that the farm's been in your family a long time, has that played any part in your decision to be farming at the moment?] I think it has probably played a part in it, it's nice ... it's not *the* reason I want to do it, but it's nice [...] it's a different experience for me, deciding to farm, you know I went to college, I did my A-Levels, worked for a bit and now I'm doing a business management diploma but I'm still very optimistic in terms of what I do, I like doing what I do, but I don't know if it's the future, if that makes sense, just 'cause there's so many other opportunities out there [...] it's not an easy life, it's not as easy you know ... *there's been lots of things to consider* [...] [Okay and what was it that made you decide to come back to the farm?] I did my A-Levels and I really enjoyed biology [...] but I never quite knew what I wanted to do. At one point I wanted to be a vet, and then I did work experience and I didn't like it, and then I guess I've always helped Dad and I got to the point where I left school, I was doing college, and then I was working at Waitrose, and it got to the point when I didn't want work in Waitrose for the rest of my life, even though the pay was good [...] and at the time we didn't have a workman on the farm, and Dad was working really hard and I just have a lot of respect for my family as well, so to some extent I did it for them, but I did it a lot for myself, it was what made me happy at the time [...] and like I said, *I believe farming is in a really good position with the growing population, everything tells you it's gonna pick up, something good is going to happen in farming and I think that's quite exciting* [So it kind of just all fell into place quite nicely then, your circumstances and your family's and the position of the

industry on the ...] Yeah like, definitely, but you know, I enjoy the work too, I like being outside, I like the fact that every day you are making a difference to the livestock you look after (Potential Successor 20)

Villa (1999: 334) observed similar deliberation amongst the younger generation farmers she interviewed, a process which she usefully describes as ‘qualitative evaluation’:

“Farming was currently given a qualitative evaluation with respect to economy, workload and spare time. If this *calculation* did not work out satisfactorily, the rational step was to quit farming and eventually taking advantage of other job openings.”

This finding is in contrast to Gill (2013: 77, emphasis added) who strongly suggests that “succession decisions are *not made rationally or objectively*” and are instead informed by “the strong historical connection a family may have to the land”.

The decision to farm for this younger cohort of potential successors is exactly that – *a decision*, with various non-familial and critically ‘self-serving’ factors to take into consideration, including, as Potential Successor 20 elucidates above, the prospects of the industry in the context of the growing population.

As demonstrated, *Younger Potential Successors* in Hatherliegh and surrounding parishes are ‘qualitative evaluators’; actively considering a range of factors, including, enjoyment of farm work, the ability to make a certain amount of profit and maintain a certain type of lifestyle, as well as the position of the farming industry. As Bjørkhaug and Wiborg (2010: 11) suggest, for the younger generation “the family has become a life project on its own and the family farm has lost much of its symbolic power for legitimizing work efforts on the farm” which they suggest, “can be connected to discussions of cultural changes in modern society where more emphasis is put on the individual”. This process of ‘qualitative evaluation’ makes Whitehead, Lobley and Baker’s (2012) suggestion that the *renaissance* in agriculture will unequivocally influence the minds of potential successors, particularly pertinent.

8.4.5 Younger Potential Successors and the Influence of the Renaissance in Agriculture

To further explore whether and exactly how the renaissance in agriculture is, as anticipated by Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012), influencing the minds of potential successors, like their older counterparts, *Younger Potential Successors* were presented with the same series of similarly themed statements from a variety of academic sources and farming organisations/associations and asked how they felt about them. Statements referred to the supposed renewed and improved position of the industry, attributing it to the emergent food security imperative. As previously

suggested, whilst the approach sought to explore potential successors' reactions to the pre-given claims, participants responded to these claims with minimal corresponding information on the topic.

Whilst some of Fish *et al*'s (2013: 46) respondents anticipated that "rising demand for food would surely translate into a better deal for farmers" (although they also suggested "there was little evidence of this occurring"), *Younger Potential Successors* generally did not support this idea. Although they enthusiastically predicted farm finances "getting a bit better" and were "reasonably positive" (Potential Successor 23), generally they *did not* anticipate any momentous financial reward as a result of the food security agenda. Whilst they believed the potential was there, potential successors frequently feared the dominance of the supermarkets would keep farmers at the bottom of the ladder. As suggested by a number of farmers interviewed as part of this research, as well as Fish *et al*'s, it was the *agro-food context* that was problematical, as opposed to the productive goals.

[Okay ... and do you think this idea that the population is predicted to reach 9 billion, and um ... and I think, and demand for food is anticipated to increase by 70 per cent by mid-century, do you think that is going to sort of manifest itself in a better deal for farmers or ...?] Well, you should get ... *I can't see how it can't* [...] a finite amount of land on which to grow it, and a finite number of farms ... but [...] there have been supermarkets, they have been dictating the market and basically and what we ... we're the only industry that you know, buy things in at retail price, sell at wholesale price and your final selling price, gets dictated to by someone else [...] you know, it's a funny business model really [Yeah] But I can't see how it can't ... but whether it goes up by the extent that it probably should ... (Potential Successor 1)

I see it getting a bit better [...] I think it's more positive than it has been, but [...] I think there's so many big businesses involved [...] I think we'll make a living but I don't think we'll make anything serious out of it ... but yeah I'm reasonably positive ... *you have to consider that the population is growing all the time*, and demand for meat and dairy is increasing with it, but yeah, I don't know whether we'll stand to make a massive amount out of it, I think it'll be the really big guys that'll see the difference ... and the price we get will continue to be dictated by supermarkets (Potential Successor 23)

[What about the financial prospects for the next maybe 5 to 10 years ... ?] *It's really difficult to say*, but I imagine with the population growing and people need food to eat, so I can't see it going any worse, but the dominance of supermarkets, well I don't see it dramatically changing things for farmers (Potential Successor 12)

[Part of the work I'm doing is looking at how the global population is going up and alongside this people are talking about how farming and farmers are possibly picking up if you like] Yeah in demand ... and yeah it should be like that [...] *the trouble is, if the price you get goes up, then the price for everything else goes up* (Potential Successor 7)

Well I think it's just basically chugging along really, I don't think we are making crazy profit or anything, just trying to break even really, um, yeah [And do you see that changing in the future?] I don't think so ... no, not really, unless there is massive...well there is, a food shortage, but it seems to be the supermarket gets all the money, and I don't see that changing really, even if there are more mouths to feed, I don't think the farmers will be any better off, you know? The thing is, a lot of the cost of farming, is like fuel and stuff like that, and diesel is gone up so much and all the bills, all the feed's gone up, so yeah, and we are not getting paid much more, we're getting paid more than five or ten years ago, but we are not getting paid anymore in terms of profit, it's just gone up with the cost of farming, and I think these costs are only going to go up too, you know in the future (Potential Successor 2)

Other potential successors were reluctant to even think about the likely financial impacts of increased demand for food.

[And if I had to ask you the same kinda question about the next five to ten years, have you got an idea in mind of what it's gonna be like in the slightly longer term?] Well I'd like to think it would be doing the same, but not any worse than it is now, hopefully better with the population growing and demand for beef increasing, but it's difficult to tell what will happen. I guess the broad trend points to it, well you'd think it would improve, with the increasing demands for food, but you can't guarantee anything in farming (Potential Successor 17)

Although *Younger Potential Successors* were evidently engaged with the contours of the debate, they were clearly *not* anticipating and therefore not motivated by any potential financial reward associated with the global context.

Just as was the case with farmers interviewed, there was some notable enthusiasm for the idea that increasing demand for food and other goods and services will 'get farmers producing again' and alleviate restrictions on production. Although Ward (1996: 210) attributes "a declining commitment to succession" characteristic of the early 1990s to a combination of "poor economic returns the changing role of agriculture in a 'post-productivist' countryside", whilst younger potential successors were evidently enthused by an increasing emphasis on production, there was

little to suggest that younger potential successors were actually *motivated* by this potential resurgence of productivism.

I think it will be good, it will help open, well one thing, you need to be able to produce more products, or more of a product, of a certain acreage of land ... because land is a finite resource isn't it [Yeah] So I think they will start pushing that, it will get farmers producing again which would be really good [Yeah] But also I expect, well I hope it'll open a lot more of the red tape, instead of seeing pollution in the river, and they now think farmers are at the source, they will now think about how we stop the pollution reaching the river ... without stopping producing, if that makes sense? [...] so we can get on with producing milk or beef or whatever (Potential Successor 23)

[How do you feel about farming in the future, given this idea we are gonna have to increase production?] Yeah I think it should be quite exciting, and we get to do what we know, which is produce food (Potential Successor 13)

It'll be good to put more of an emphasis on production than there is at present (Potential Successor 12)

As already proposed, there is increasing suggestion “public opinion has shifted in favour of farming” (Carruthers, Winter and Evans, 2013: 4). *Younger Potential Successors* were very aware of renewed public interest in farming, and commonly evidenced this by referencing the popularity of farming themed TV programmes, including the BBC's *Countryfile* and Channel 4's *First Time Farmers*:

The public ... I mean, you know that programme First Time Farmers, you know, they wouldn't have made that show 5 years ago, by any means ... but now it's on quite ... there are several shows, you know Countryfile [Yeah definitely] It does show what people are doing, what they're interested in [Yeah it does] Absolutely ... but like five years ago ... I mean, that kind of thing wouldn't have been popular, people wouldn't have been interested (Potential Successor 23)

I had a teacher in school and she'd never watched Countryfile and now she like absolutely loves it [...] she's become a really big fan of it (Potential Successor 20)

There's definitely more interest in farming just 'cause it's on TV and that ... it's in the media a lot [Okay, yeah I suppose] And Countryfile, that's on you know BBC 1 now, people seem to be more interested in farming (Potential Successor 2)

Like farmers and the older cohort of potential successors interviewed, potential successors

attributed farming's rejuvenated standing to the wider global context, and specifically the increasing global demand for food. Similarly, Carruthers, Winter and Evans (2013: 24) attributed increasing public concern for food security to "actual or anticipated constraints on supply, e.g. as indicated by rising food prices" which have "risen recently in the UK and globally, along with fuel cost increases and wider economic instability and insecurity".

There will be a time when farmers will be treated better, when people really start to realise *how much trouble we are going to be in* (Potential Successor 23)

I think if the *population increases*, people are going to be even more interested in where their food comes from (Potential Successor 20)

It does still feel like we're waiting for things to pick up ... it does almost feel a bit like we're over the really worst bit, but yeah if it's gonna be a *similar level of demand like it was just after the second World War, where there was hardly any food around ...* then yeah, yeah it could well change farming [Do you think it will be good for farming?] Yeah, yeah I think it will be, 'cause people will be, there will be a lot more respect then 'cause everyone will recognise that you can't just easily produce food ... you'll need a farm at least 3 times a day [laughs] (Potential Successor 8b)

I think gradually people are beginning to sort of value farmers and what they do, more and more again ... and I think people are beginning to realise *where their food* is coming from and it probably is because there are more and more programmes on the telly about, about it (Potential Successor 8b)

There's definitely more respect for farmers ... like I say, it was a while back, I think um, when I was at school, it was like 'oh you're going to work at home 'cause your stupid' and I think there is perhaps this idea of it becoming more ... important (Potential Successor 7)

Whilst potential successors were embracing this renewed interest and appreciation, many participants commented on the accuracy of their public image.

A lot of the image of farming is of Hunters and tweed [laughter] ... and it's not really accurate [...] it's always going to be hard work, dirty work ... nothing cool about that [laughter] (Potential Successor 8a)

People do like young farmers, yeah ... it's on TV at the moment ... and like this guy, he was saying how people wanna go into it, 'cause it's a fashionable and profitable career ... yeah right, up to your knees in shit every day and not earning any money

[...] you know, farming, people have a nice image in their heads and it's definitely cool now (Potential Successor 10)

I think people are confusing this idea of what they see on the telly and what farming actually is (Potential Successor 7)

These concerns mirror the findings of a 2008 Defra (Defra, 2010c) survey which “reveal[ed] that current public perceptions of farming are mostly positive, but the public have a very modest knowledge and understanding of farming” (Carruthers, Winter and Evans, 2013: 12). Similarly, a 2012 YouGov Cambridge survey (see Carruthers, Winter and Evans, 2013) found, of those surveyed, 72% felt that they do not know much about, or know nothing, about the sector.

Despite these concerns of the accuracy of the image, there was a general and overall positive feeling about farming and the being a farmer amongst these potential successors.

I think this is a good time to be starting farming (Potential Successor 13)

I think it's definitely a good time to be a farmer (Potential Successor 8a)

I feel it's a good place to be (Potential Successor 17)

Farming's a bit cooler (Potential Successor 1)

Renewed public interest in food and farming was not just conducive with general positivity, but importantly is allowing *Younger Potential Successors* to feel proud about being a farmer and be at ease with their farmer identity.

I'd definitely be proud to say I was a farmer (Potential Successor 17)

Despite establishing an incredibly successful non-agricultural career, Potential Successor 1 boldly claimed how he prefers to introduce himself to new people as a farmer:

If someone asks me, that I've never met before 'what do you do?', I tell them I'm a full-time farmer, and a part-time businessman (Potential Successor 1)

This is in stark contrast to the feelings of farmers observed by Lobley *et al* (2005a: 39) in 2005, who “displayed low levels of self-worth associated with their perceptions that they were not understood and were unwanted”. A rather striking example of this uneasiness is the following narrative from two farmers interviewed by Lobley *et al* (2005a):

- Farmer 1: I don't like telling people very much that I'm a farmer
- Farmer 2: No, you tend to shut up with that now. A few years ago ...
- Farmer 1: You do. Twenty years ago you were a farmer and you were proud of it, and now, just like you say, you go there and you just keep your head down, you don't, well, unless you wanna annoy 'em

Although feelings of an improved public perception were commonly expressed amongst farmers and *Older Potential Successors*, what sets this cohort of *Younger Potential Successors* apart is that this improved public standing is, to some extent, actually to some extent, influencing *Younger Potential Successors'* in their decision to enter farming. This fundamental shift in public attitude has simply made it more acceptable to be a farmer, with clear implications for *Younger Potential Successors*.

There's a lot of positivity at the moment, and it's always good, the support of other people, it's always good when choosing something that you could spend the rest of your life doing (Potential Successor 8a)

I don't think 10 years ago [...] I would have wanted to go into farming, so yeah it's picked up, it feels like it's in a good place and like well, 'cause, because it's getting better I kinda feel like I'm making the right choice (Potential Successor 20)

In her study into stress in the farming community in 2001, Phelps (2001) cites the reasons for feelings of isolation amongst farmers. In addition to the more commonly understood causes of isolation, such as the physical isolation and working alone, as denoted below, lack of government support, and critically lack of understanding amongst and support from the non-farming community were also felt to contribute to the feeling of isolation.

“Just over a fifth of respondents stated that they felt isolated, which was also significantly associated with higher levels of anxiety and/or depression. As well as the physical isolation inherent in farming and the fact that the majority of farmers in this study worked alone most of the time, the finding that a number of respondents felt that not only *the government was unsupportive*, but that also the *non-farming community did not understand or support farming* may contribute to a feeling of isolation” (Phelps, 2001: 24)

Similarly, in their study of farming stress in Buckinghamshire, Campbell (2001) identified isolation as a primary cause of stress, but like Phelps' (2001) observation, this was less a problem

of physical isolation and more of psychological isolation attributable to farmers' supposed poor standing in society and the public's lack of understanding of farming.

This denotes how public perception of farming is an important factor in not just how farmers feel about how they are perceived, but also their physical and mental well-being, and in the context of this argument, further affirms the evident importance and emerging influence of farming's improved standing.

A number of these potential successors were also enjoying the accompanying understanding of farming as no longer a 'last resort' career.

[Are people starting to recognise farming as a bona fide career?] Yeah I really think so (Potential Successor 23)

Farming wasn't my insurance option ... I chose to go into it, even after getting my degree (Potential Successor 23)

Before, people thought, 'oh I can't do anything else, so I'll come back to the farm and work on the farm', but there's so much more to it, especially if you wanna be growing crops or you know, you need to know what's going on, so the scientist's brain, you can use it if you want to, and people, well young people, are seeing farming as a proper career choice (Potential Successor 17)

Years ago, you could get away with not, you could be a bit more narrow minded if you know what I mean ... [but now] you've got to be all sorts, you gotta be a good businessman [...] I've know someone ... when he left school, well he was so brainy, he could have done whatever he wanted ... and he came home and they milk cows, um, but they've put in robots now ... so they don't have to milk and things like that (Potential Successor 7)

Although Potential Successor 2 concurred, he also warned that you still had to be interested in the fundamentals of farming.

I think farming is kind of a proper career, like, well when my Dad decided to farm it was more because he couldn't really do anything else, it was like the only option he had and that, 'cause he didn't do that well at school, but I suppose now it's changing ... you still have to *want* to do it though, 'cause it's always gonna involve the basic stuff (Potential Successor 2)

The renaissance in agriculture seems to be influencing potential successors. Particularly the resulting levels of public interest and respect are making farming more acceptable to young

potential successors. For example, Potential Successor 20 was keen to remind me that she could have turned their hand to anything career-wise, and yet, despite their ability to ‘do anything’, she has made the decision to pursue farming, which she linked to a wider appreciation of the intellectual demands of working in the industry.

I could have gone to Uni, I could have gone into anything really and I want to go farming and I think people recognise that you have to be intelligent to be a farmer now ... and that’s important [...] you know people used to stereotype farmers as being you know, like they can’t hardly talk and everything ... but people are beginning to appreciate they are a lot more knowledgeable than people think they are ... (Potential Successor 20)

8.4.6 The Influence of the Renaissance in Agriculture: Some Conclusions

The positivity and renewed interest in farming as a career evident in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes also matches the wider picture. For example, full-time enrolments on agriculture and related undergraduate courses have seen an 11.4 per cent between 2008/9 and 2012/13 (HESA, 2014) (Figure 8.1). In addition, whilst in 2012 the total number of degree-level enrolments at UK universities remained relatively static, Farmers Weekly (2012b) reported a ‘surge in UK students choosing agriculture’, increasing by 5.9 per cent (HESA, 2014).

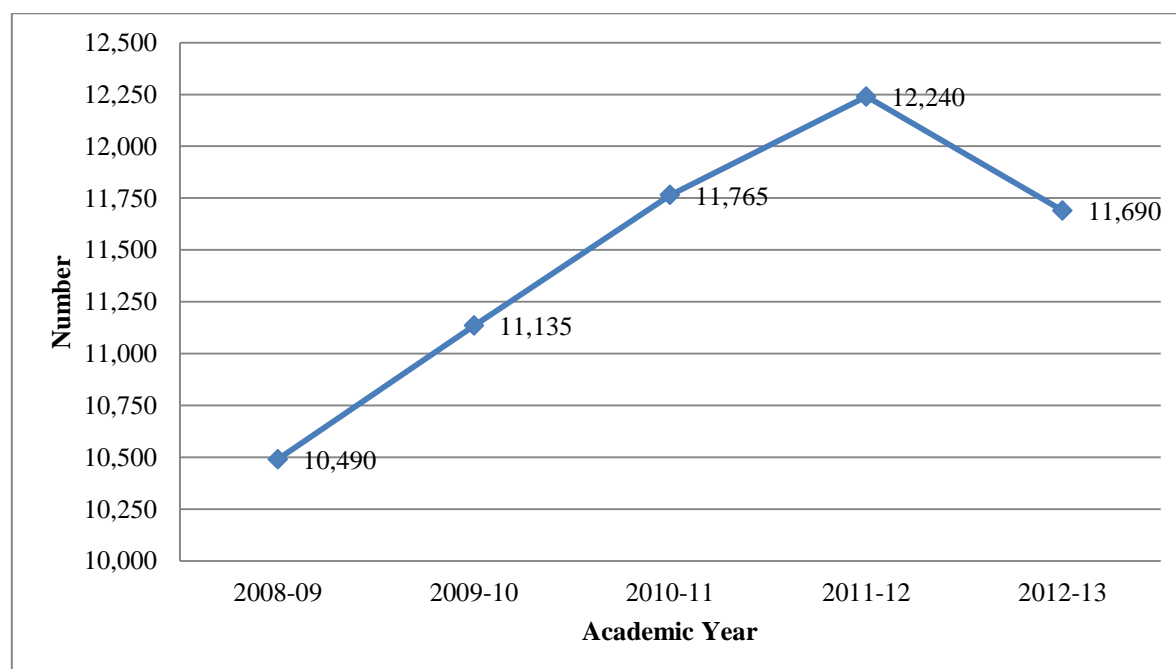


Figure 8.1 Total number of full-time students enrolled on HE agriculture and related subject courses (*Source: HESA, 2014*)

Similarly assuring is Office for National Statistics' data which indicate a 24.1% increase in students obtaining first degrees in Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related subjects between 1990-00 and 2012-13 (Figure 8.2). Whilst Brassley (2008: 10) warns how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures "should be taken only as a guide" because "they include veterinary students" and "probably include diploma students without explicitly stating so", in combination with the HESA data, it broadly suggests that numbers in HE agricultural courses are increasing.

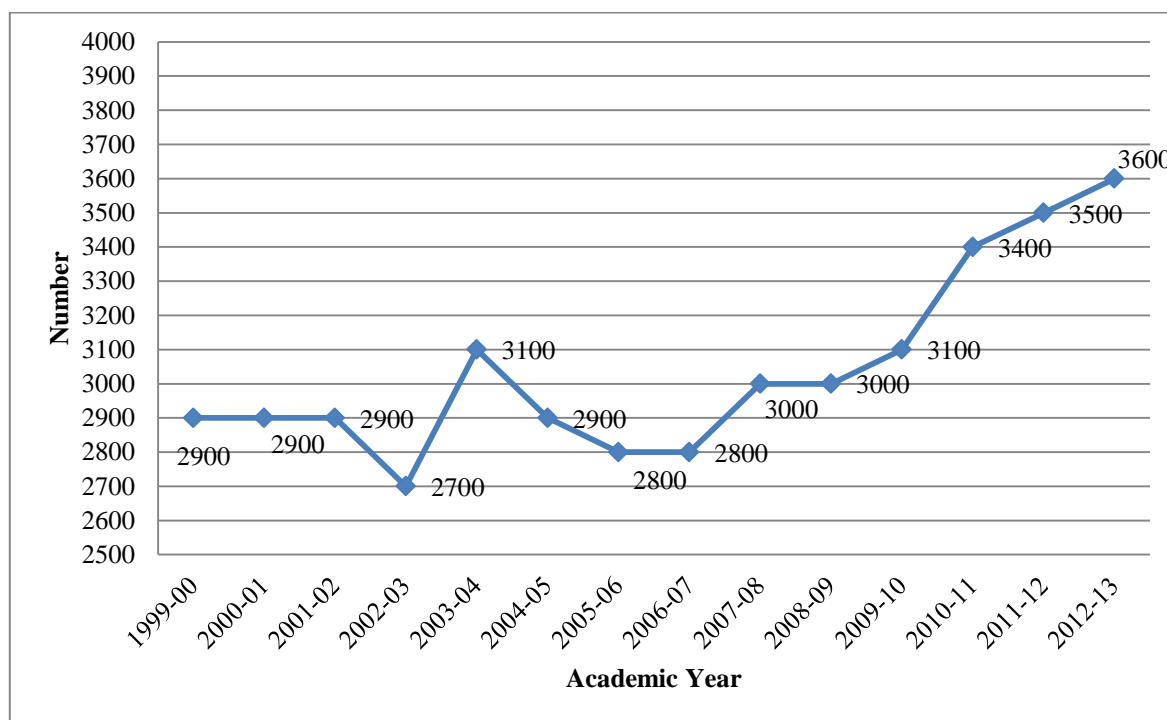


Figure 8.2 Number of students obtaining first degrees in Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related subjects (Source: Office of National Statistics 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011)

This apparent interest stands in stark contrast to contemporary concerns about the availability of a next generation of farmers. Similarly, in only 2010, Lobley *et al* reported how "student applications to agricultural colleges and universities have decreased dramatically in the last three decades in the UK, resulting in the reduction of postschool educational provision in agriculture as departments close across the country" (Lobley *et al*, 2010: 62) and in 2008, Brassley described a "recent decline of student numbers in higher agricultural education", as well as "the disappearance of some of the older and more prestigious agricultural departments" (Brassley, 2008: 15). In combination with the preceding narratives of *Younger Potential Successors*, it broadly suggests that the supposed *renaissance in agriculture* is influencing the minds of potential successors.

8.5 Potential Successors' Understandings of Food Security

Although Fish *et al*'s (2013) exploration made welcomed headway in understanding how the farming community are interpreting the food security agenda, as argued above, there still remains

a lack of explicit engagement with the potential successor and their understanding of their term. Like incumbent farmers, potential successors were asked “what do you understand by the term food security?”. In the same way as farmers, potential successors had, without prompt, demonstrated sound knowledge of the discourse elsewhere in the interview, but subsequently, many failed to match those ideas with the term. As suggested in Chapter 6, this mismatch, is a product of the fact food security discourse is relatively new, having “[only] emerged as a key marker of UK food policy in *recent years*” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 41), as well as the role of farmers’ own farming situation, influencing their understanding of the term (see Section 6.2.2).

Given the stark impact of the wider societal shift on potential successors’ upbringing, subsequent experiences and resulting mode of transfer of managerial control, it was initially anticipated that differences in understanding of the term may be related to potential successor age, particularly given that many of the *Younger Potential Successors* had previously offered key elements of the discourse as part of their motivations for farming (see Section 8.4.5). However, this was not the case and like incumbent farmers, there were a mixture of definitions offered, with the way they understand food security “influenced by a multitude of factors relating to sources of information, exposure to policy debates, participation in agricultural politics and so on and is not easily reduced to a simple explanation” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 4). Although, unlike farmers interviewed, *all* potential successors felt able to offer *some* definition of the term.

Like farmers’ understanding of the term in both this research, and in Fish *et al*’s (2013), food security was understood by a (surprising) number of potential successors to be related to the issues of food safety and traceability.

Well I suppose food security to me ... is where foods come from, how it’s handled from ... to the final destination and um ... and actually in this country, it is fairly traceable when it gets to the final destination isn’t it [Okay] But when you buy it from other places, you really don’t know what’s been added to it [Yes] So I think, security for us, means you know, you need to know what it’s been through really ... yeah (Potential Successor 3 – ‘old’, *direct route*)

[Okay, yeah ... so part of my work, a big part of my work is trying to find out what farmers understand by the term food security ... so what does it mean to you?] Um ... well [It’s got lots of different meanings so there’s no right or wrong really, so first of all had you heard of it?] It’s not a term I’ve really paid much notice to before really ... but obviously, just recently, I would of always thought about what comes into the country regarding ... what’s crossing your borders [Yeah okay] So yeah what’s coming in ... [Yeah] You know they showed in our paper, about this Findus, and how it went from Poland, to Hull, to Ireland, to France ... back to the Findus place in the

North of the country and I didn't realised it was processed like that ... so it's about knowing what's going in our food (Potential Successor 24 – *'old', direct route*)

I think it means the supply of food for this country is secure, so secure from um, we need to be ... well I don't think we necessarily have to be able to feed ourselves, I'm not sure that's relevant these days because of people's tastes and things ... but that our imports are secure and that they're safe and that what we produce in this country is secure and safe ... that's my understanding of food security (Potential Successor 18 – *'old', direct route*)

Like participating farmers, many potential successors were able to offer a broadly correct understanding of the term, typically referencing the key drivers of food security – growing global population and the ensuing increase in demand for food.

We are increasing population, where is food going to come from? [Okay, yeah] So 'food security', yeah where and what (Potential Successor 21 – *'old', professional detour*)

Constant supply I suppose ... as the population grows [...] Just having a constant stream of food ... to make sure food is in constant supply [...] yeah making sure we have enough (Potential Successor 10 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

I guess it's like um, making sure we have enough food, and obviously that's more um, more important when the population is growing so much [...] and how we are gonna make our food supplies secure (Potential Successor 8a – *'young' – undecided/too early*)

Potential Successor 4 also understood the term in the context of the growing population, but also further asserted, achieving food security meant having access 'to the basics' or what we actually *need*.

It's having the opportunity there to source what you want to and when you want to ... [Yes] But food security, well food security is not necessarily about being able to buy cucumbers in the middle of winter and [laughs] strawberries and such like, it's having the basics available, and having um, having what you need really ... um, some people, many people, thousands and millions haven't got the basics and it's about making sure we all have what we need, but yeah what we *need* as the population keeps going up and up ... um, food security as a whole is having the basics available to those that need it (Potential Successor 4 – *'old', direct route*)

Potential Successor 12 was the only potential successor to frame the term in the national, rather than global context, viewing achievement of food security as national problem of self-sufficiency.

I would have said it's our country's food security ... so we need to be as self-sufficient as we possibly can ... in simple terms (Potential Successor 12 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

Although like incumbent farmers, there was no clear pattern to understanding of the term amongst potential successors, as a group, it was generally felt they had more of an appreciation of the complexity of the term and more frequently described the need to produce more, *alongside* the need to do so sustainably.

Yeah, I suppose it's, well food security is about how we make sure we have enough food, and to make sure we can continue growing or producing it I suppose, not damaging the land or whatever, doing it sustainably (Potential Successor 14 – *'young', direct route*)

For me, I guess it's about making sure there's enough food to feed a growing population, but making sure it's done sustainably (Potential Successor 2 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

It's about making sure there's enough, well securing food supplies for the population [...] But doing that in a way that's sustainable, in the long term (Potential Successor 23 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

Food security is about making sure there's enough food for future generations, or even just now, or in a few years' time, to make sure there's enough to eat (Potential Successor 8b – *'young', too young/undecided*)

Potential Successor 5 had a truly multi-dimensional and particularly insightful understanding of the term and how the various dimensions were connected. Interestingly, he had returned to the farm from a lengthy and successful professional detour and arguably his holistic understanding of the term may have perhaps stemmed from his time 'outside' of farming. If we understand, as Candel *et al* (2014: 47) suggest, "the meaning of food security results from the different interests and [...] positions of stakeholders using the concept", then Potential Successor 5's prolonged detachment from the farm during his professional detour, has given him this multi-dimensional perspective.

Okay, well, as far as I'm concerned, it's a world issue, in terms of the world, in terms of the world being able to feed itself. So, um [long pause] my understanding of food security, is about there being, the world being secure enough to provide enough food.

No... that's ambiguous, as well. That, that there, that we produce enough food, for the, for the population. But I think it's more than that, it's gonna be about distributing it right, and you know... you know, to the people that need it and to the people that don't and obviously doing it sustainably and in a way that, in a way that doesn't damage the land. I think the changing weather, even if you, even if you, you um... you look at the weather in the last few years, it's more challenging, not just here, but everywhere, droughts and floods and whatever, it's all ramping up the pressure I 'spose, and it's all linked too (Potential Successor 5 – *'old', professional detour*)

Two potential successors recognised the dual meaning of the term, a testament to the multifaceted nature of the term and multiple meanings associated with it.

To me, it's where food comes from, and you know, traceability and that kind of thing and that's one thing we do hear about at college you know how people like to be able to trace where their food has come from and say, so it doesn't go too far, and food miles, and you know making sure we have enough food really ... to feed a growing planet, safely and in a way that doesn't impact on the environment, doesn't damage the environment I mean (Potential Successor 17 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

Food security would mean to me ... um ... more like farm assurance side, and making sure you know about traceability and stuff like that, that's what it would mean to me, but also you can flip it and say that food security would mean having a secure food supply for, for the, to feed the population ... so yeah (Potential Successor 20 – *'young', short-term diversion route*)

Previous investigations into the use of the term 'food security' in political and academic arenas have also highlighted its various meanings and interpretations (Candel *et al*, 2014). Kirwan and Maye (2013) attribute this variation in meanings, or what they describe as a 'fractured consensus' surrounding the term, to the different interests and policy positions of stakeholders using the concept. For example, in their investigation into use of the term in both policy documents and conference proceedings associated with the CAP post-2013 reform process, Candel *et al* (2014) observed 7 different 'frames' (or distinct and coherent sets of meanings) associated with the wider, overarching concept or 'consensus frame', listed below in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2Breakdown of frames observed by Candel *et al* (2014)

Frame	Number of actors (percentage of total of actors)
Productionist	41 (37.3%)
Environmental	36 (32.7%)
Development	6 (5.5%)
Free trade	5 (4.5%)
Regional	9 (8.2%)
Food sovereignty	8 (7.3%)
Multiple	5 (4.5%)

Source: Based on Candel *et al* (2014)

The same lack of consensus amongst participating potential successors (and farmers – see Section 6.2.2), simply reaffirms the fact, “food security is a multidimensional issue” (Candel *et al*, 2014: 57) and demonstrates how the different frames understood to undergird the wider political debate are also present/emerging at the individual farm level.

8.6 Conclusion

Based on interviews with potential successors, this chapter has explored their intentions, motivations and understandings and, uniquely and unequivocally, considered the potential successor as a key actor in both our understanding of intergenerational farm transfer and wider food security discourse.

Potential successors’ intentions largely corroborated farmers’ understandings of their succession status, and further refute concern about the availability of a next generation. However, comparison revealed potential successors were more confident and positive about their plans to succeed to the farm than their parents and grandparents had thought, or perhaps allowed themselves to think.

Building on the typology offered in Chapter 7, the chapter attributed stark differences in potential successors’ motivations to the wider societal shift from discipline to expressivity and resulting characteristic of their upbringing, with *Older Potential Successors* citing identical feelings and experiences of identifying themselves (or more accurately being identified) to incumbent farmers interviewed. Although there were notable exceptions, which the chapter has explored, in contrast, their *Younger* counterparts had a largely different experience, predicated on choice, and were in a number of circumstances even actively discouraged from entering farming.

This chapter has demonstrated how the way in which farmers’ children ‘become’ farmers has and is changing and demonstrates the nature of this change. As increasing emphasis is being put on individuality and expressivity, *Younger Potential Successors* are now seeing the decision to farm, as a *genuine decision*. Their array of off-farm experiences (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.3) have

meant they have become ‘qualitative evaluators’; judging farming as a career option, according to factors such as, whether it will provide them with things like enough money or enough time off in comparison to their wider experiences and other career options open to them. Tradition and the importance of family remained relevant for this emergent group, but it is now simply *one factor amongst many*. As qualitative evaluators, *Younger Potential Successors* were also unequivocally considering the potential of the industry as part of this decision, with direct reference to the opportunities and benefits emerging and likely to emerge with relation to the food security agenda, or the so called *renaissance in agriculture*. Although *Older Potential Successors* agreed that the food security agenda and the associated demands on the industry are ultimately positive, analysis revealed, the agenda appeared to have very little bearing on *Older Potential Successors*’ or ‘born to be farmers’ desire to farm.

Finally, to add to understanding of how the farming community are interpreting and understanding the food security agenda, and particularly given the importance of potential successors – as next generation farmers – to the delivery of the food security objectives, the chapter explored their understanding of the term. Like incumbent farmers, potential successors demonstrated a good grasp of the wider discourse in other parts of the interview, but when explicitly asked their understanding of the term, defined it in many different ways, reinforcing previous research and the understanding of food security as a multi-dimensional concept. As is the case with farmers’ understanding of the term, the failure to match the term with the broader imperatives of the agenda has wider implications for the way food security is communicated to potential successors; these implications are discussed further in the following and concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 9 now presents the overall conclusion of this thesis, reiterating the key findings and points of contribution to the field, implications of its findings, limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

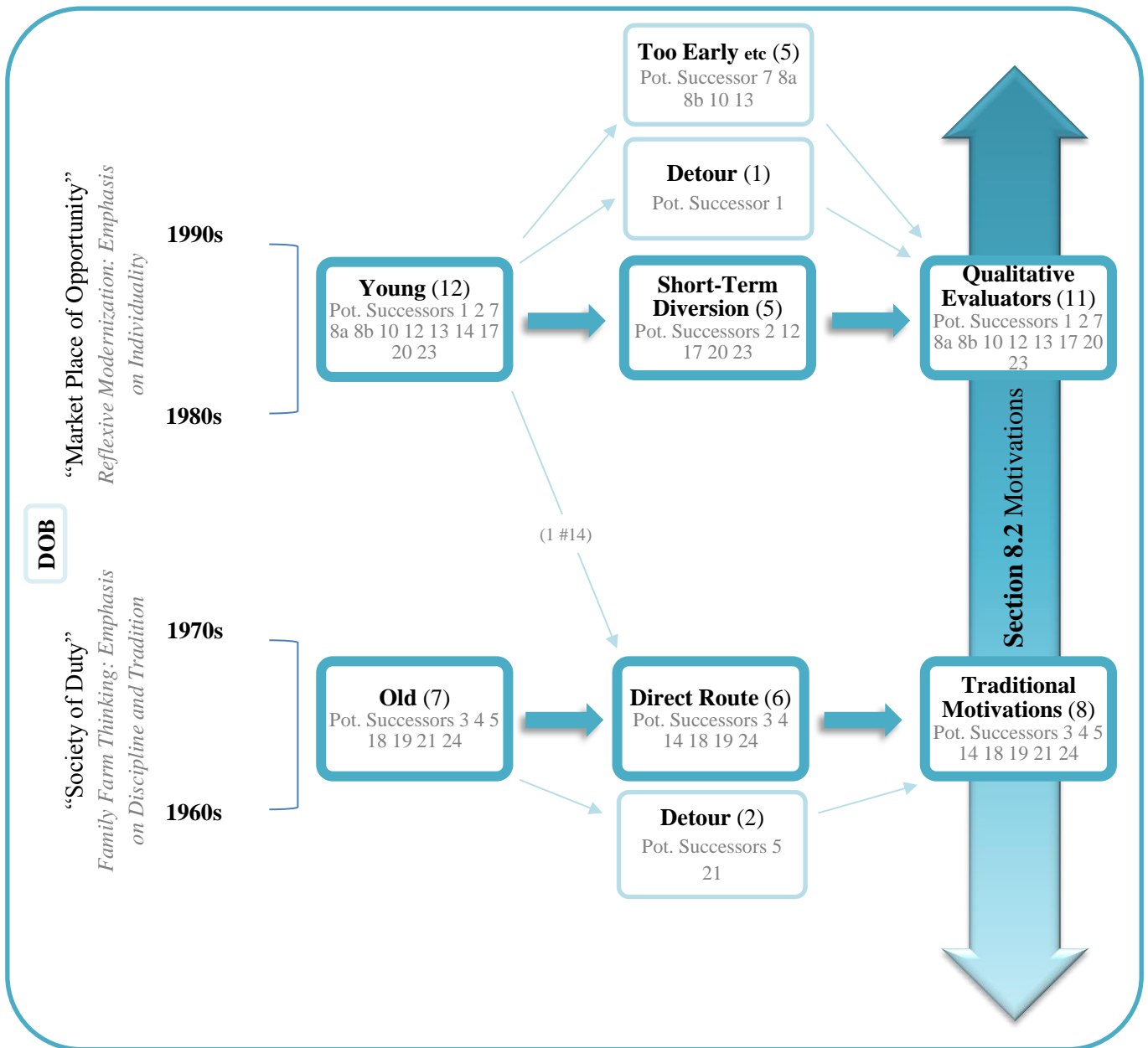


Figure 8.3 Section 8.2 'Potential Successors Motivations' – Diagram of motivations typology

Chapter Nine: Conclusions and Implications

9.0 Introduction

The overall aim of this research has been to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the process of intergenerational succession in family farms, in the context of emerging food security discourse.

This thesis highlights the family farm as a central component in rising to the challenges of feeding a growing world population and providing a raft of other goods and services in an increasingly constrained context. It focuses on and explores the impact of succession, understood as “imperative in family farming” (Price and Conn, 2012: 96), on the propensity of the family farm to respond to these challenges and responds to a surprising lack of consideration for the role of the family farm in this context (Fish *et al*, 2013).

The empirical findings from this thesis reinforce a wealth of previous literature that has explicated the impact of the process of succession on farmer behaviour and the trajectory of the farm, and utilises these findings to suggest, as British agriculture vows to take a lead role in rising to the food security challenge, benefit can be derived from effective succession. Specifically, Lobley *et al* (2010: 61) suggest, ‘effective succession’, measured firstly in terms of the identification of a successor, and secondly, according to the ‘smoothness’ of the transfer of managerial control, is conducive with a multitude of positive adaptations and outcomes, and multiplied up, have potential to contribute to the achievement of local, national and global food security objectives. And yet, despite their importance, this research has highlighted ongoing concern about the availability of a next generation of family farmers, as well as concern over the smoothness of the transfer of managerial control between the generations, the extent and accuracy of which, it argues, have yet to be fully understood because of insufficient engagement with the potential successor in previous research. By including the potential successor as a distinct research participant, the research offers a more inclusive and therefore accurate understanding of these issues.

Concomitantly, the widely propagated projections of population growth have seen farmers as producers valued once again, and the ‘challenge of feeding the 9 billion’ has, colloquially at least, (re)glamourized the industry. Following grave concern over the existence of a next generation of farmers, the implications of a renewed interest in food security and farming’s accompanying ‘sexy’ image²² have important and yet unexplored consequences for the desirability of, and commitment to, intergenerational farm succession.

²² As described by NFU deputy president, Meriwig Raymond in 2012

Whilst these important linkages between the process of intergenerational succession and the delivery of global food security objectives have been *suggested* by the academic community (Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012; Lobley *et al*, 2010), there has yet been minimal empirical work to this effect.

To conclude this analysis and synthesise its findings, this chapter begins with a reiteration of the research objectives and the scope of the research. Next, an overview of the gaps in the literature this research sought to fill is offered. It continues by recapping the principle arguments of the thesis as developed in each chapter and discusses the wider contributions of the study to both academia and policy. The second section offers a critical discussion of the limitations of the research (section 9.2). Finally, section 9.3 makes a series of recommendations for the way in which future research can build on the findings established in this study.

9.1 Research Objectives

Explicitly, the research aimed to fulfil the research objectives outlined in Table 1.1.

The aim of this research was to understand family farm succession in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, in the context of the food security agenda, drawing on the experiences of both incumbent farmers, as well as their potential successors. The study was set against the widely propagated projections of population growth and accompanying demands for food, and other goods and services, i.e. the ‘food security challenge’. From this, a number of broad questions emerged, that drove the overall thesis: How and why does succession occur? How does succession impact on the farm business? Does this have potential to influence the delivery of food security objectives? Are we enduring a crisis in succession? Will we have a ‘next generation’ of farmers to farm for food security? How is the food security agenda being interpreted amongst farmers and their potential successors? – is it influencing the appeal of farming and passing on the farm?

9.2 Research Gaps

There were a number of specific issues in the literature pertaining to **succession** that this study intended to address.

- Firstly, in recognition of the dominance of quantitative and large scale surveys in the succession field, and given much of the data collection on UK succession associated with this work was conducted in the 1990s (although there has been *some* exceptional contemporary and qualitative research), this research represents a qualitative and contemporary contribution, to enhance and update understanding in this field.
- Secondly, it responds to the observation that we know very little about the process of succession (Dyck *et al*, 2002) by focusing on the way in which managerial control is being

transferred between the generations, drawing on the experiences of *both* incumbent farmers and potential successors to do so.

- Lastly, the research highlights how previous research into succession (including both understanding of the availability of a next generation, as well as the transfer of managerial control) has generally failed to include the potential successor, tending to focus on the incumbent farmer. This thesis has explicitly responded to this lack of engagement by offering a working definition of the potential successor and subsequently interviewing *both* incumbent farmers and potential successors. It is therefore able to offer a more rounded understanding of intergenerational farm transfer.

Similarly, there were a number of specific issues in relation to previous academic engagement with the **food security agenda** that this study aimed to address.

- Firstly, building directly on Fish *et al*'s (2013) claims that, whilst a wealth of research effort has focused on the scientific and technocratic domains of the food security debate, consideration of how these objectives will be achieved on the ground, amongst the lived realities of farming is decidedly lacking. By empirically exploring the impact of succession on farmer behaviour and post-handover farm business performance, this research has demonstrated the importance of household and development cycle factors, such as succession in the context of the wider production and multifunctional goals and highlights the family farm as a central component in the agenda.
- Secondly, there has been very little engagement with how food security it is understood amongst the farming community. Linked to this failure to consider the farming community's understanding of the term, is a lack of consideration for how they are interpreting this agenda, i.e. whether they feel it is a positive or negative thing and what it could mean for family farms in the industry. This research explores both farmers' and potential successors' understandings and interpretations of the term and situates these findings within the wider discussion of succession and its appeal.

9.3 The Research Argument: Key Findings and Possible Implications

Although given the breadth and scope of the research, no one specific argument can be briefly conveyed, the following section presents a succinct response to the specific research objectives (Table 9.1). In addition to recapping the principle arguments in the context of the objectives, it discusses the contributions of the respective findings to advancing academic knowledge and understanding, and more broadly, its potential contribution to policy.

9.2.1 Farmers' Experiences of Succession

As anticipated, entry into farming via established, longstanding family farms was the dominant route of entry for farmers interviewed in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes and reaffirms the view that “no other socioeconomic group displays such pronounced occupational heredity as farmers” (de Hann, 1994: 173). As empirically demonstrated, having been deemed eligible (i.e. typically the eldest male), farmers from *Established Family Farms* were subtly *socialised* to fulfil their role in the ‘family story’, typically through early and extensive involvement in the farm which left them with little opportunity to (want to) do anything else.

Whilst this research reiterates previous observations of how, what it describes as the *ideal of continuity* (understood as the set of ideas and beliefs in place that facilitate the transfer of the farm business to the next generation), is responsible for ‘traditional’ entry into farming, typically by the eldest son, to an *Established Family Farm*, it also observed how the influence of the farm family’s commitment to continuity extends (physically) beyond this linear form of transfer. Specifically, the empirical evidence has demonstrated how *Newly Established Family Farms*, including both *Extension Family Farms*, run (formally or informally) in conjunction with the home farm, and *Separate Family Farms*, run entirely separately from the home farm, are *no less* the product of family farming ideals.

Whilst not the *direct* product of the ideal of continuity and the associated desire for a next generation *per se*, as demonstrated, the creation of one successor inadvertently ‘created’ another farmer. Like those who had succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, farmers who took on *Extension Family Farms* recalled intense feelings of attachment to both the locality and the occupation. As stated in the preceding analysis, *Extension* farmers were exclusively one of only two male children, and were, where identified, a maximum of two years younger than their brothers. As posited, the similarity in ages and subsequent similar levels of involvement in the family farm, meant that the non-eligible brothers had become embroiled in the socialisation of ‘the successor’. Just like those who succeeded to *Established Family Farms*, their early involvement in the farm had firmly shaped their identity, rendering them feeling unable to do anything else. Despite their involvement in the farm, these farmers were attuned to and accepting of the fact they were unlikely to succeed to the home farm; further testament to the strength of the social norms that upheld this as ‘the norm’. The purchasing of an additional farm, often in the vicinity of the home farm for the non-eligible sons satisfied the desire to pass on an economically viable farm business to their next generation, and yet ensured the non-eligible son was content. On evaluation, it is important to consider that this kind of *Extension* farm is likely to have been a product of a time when buying a second farm was largely obtainable for a farming family, with no such patterns observed amongst contemporary transfer arrangements.

An additional group of *Newly Established Family Farmers* emerged from the analysis. These farmers were the younger or youngest of several children, and despite the clear understanding of their ineligibility as the home farm successor, they demonstrated an intense commitment to the family tradition of farming. Again, involvement in farm work from an early age was instrumental for these participants. Although, unlike *Established* and *Extension Farmers* these farmers exercised a lot more *choice* in their decision to enter farming, they were still notably committed to family tradition and were also consumed by the farming lifestyle.

Entirely *New Entrants* were small in number; a finding that reaffirms the importance of familial connections to and hereditary nature the industry. Although a minority group, they are nonetheless important in our understanding of how land occupancy in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes has been shaped. As anticipated, with no prior-familial connection to the industry, *New Entrants* truly chose farming purely because of an interest in and enjoyment of the farm work.

Although commitment to the family tradition and the hereditary nature of family farming has been plentifully observed in the wider family farming literature, the intensity of this commitment remains a central observation of this research, adding to our understanding of how and why farming remains the most hereditary of all occupations.

Furthermore, although a large number of farmers had not taken the ‘traditional’ route into farming, it is important to understand, as this research has demonstrated, that these *Newly Established Family Farms* are no less the product of family farming ideals and just because they are not farming on the same land as their fathers and grandfathers does not preclude them from being motivated by their family’s connection to the area and/or industry. This is an important observation in terms of understanding farmer behaviour; it is increasingly appreciated that farmers on established holdings maybe guided by household or familial factors (Lobley and Butler, 2010), including tradition or expectation and thus may not behave ‘rationally’. However, although less (physically) obvious, this applies equally to their counterparts on *Extension Family Farms* and even *Separate Family Farms*.

9.2.2 The Importance and (Increasing) Desirability of Succession

Unlike other research which has reported the ongoing and increasing hardships of a farming lifestyle and called into question the desirability of intergenerational succession (Ward, 1996; Kaine *et al*, 1997; Villa, 1999; Ball and Wiley, 2005; Price and Conn, 2012; Barclay *et al*, 2012), this was not the case for participating farmers in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Whilst analysis of interview data suggested how the importance of successor identification varied according to farmers’ own mode of entry to the farm, with importance evidently highest for farmers of *Established Family Farms* and *Extension Family Farms*, passing on the farm to a next

generation remained a *universally important objective* for *all* participating farmers. Although a large number of participating farmers had clearly felt the pressures of the recent challenging economic and environmental context, these feelings had little bearing on their confidence in the future of the industry and, concomitantly, farmers were generally positive about the opportunities the industry could offer their potential successors.

Interestingly, given the objectives of this research (see Table 9.1, above), farmers' enthusiasm was often, voluntarily framed within the contours of the food security challenge, with specific reference to the widely propagated projections of global population growth, and in particular the associated re-emergence of productivism. Although references to the imperative were articulated in the basic contours of the debate i.e. the rapidly increasing population, this justification is a significant finding given concern from Fish *et al* (2013: 40) that "we know very little about how these agendas are being understood by farming publics".

Although there were exceptions, farmers generally held the view that an increasing population and the associated increasing demand for food presented future farmers (and therefore, their potential successors) with a good and potentially financially rewarding opportunity. Although, unprompted, farmers were confidently able to describe many of the key aspects of the food security challenge, farmers failed to link these ideas with the term 'food security' when later asked for their understanding of the term. Instead, many farmers defined food security in terms of food safety and traceability; whilst this 'mismatch' between their unprompted and prompted understandings of food security was initially thought to be related to the prevalence of horse meat adulteration scandal at the time of the interviews, understanding of food security as issues of food safety and traceability had also been previously been found by Fish *et al* (2013), attributable instead to the various applications of the term in policy circles filtering down to the individual farm level, as well as swayed by their own farming ethos or circumstances.

Amongst the farmers who were able to define the term correctly²³, understandings were generally limited to the idea of feeding a growing population, and the *availability* of food. Many of these farmers understood the issue of food availability as a *national concern* rather than a global one. A small number of farmers demonstrated an impressive understanding of the term and its complexities, including the combination of production *and* environmental goals, and the increasingly constrained context in which we need to meet these goals. Overall, there was no pattern to the way in which farmers defined the term.

²³ A 'correct' understanding referred to the overarching food security challenge – although it is important to appreciate that there are many elements of the concept food security, with aspects such as food safety integral to it.

Ultimately, interview analysis revealed a diverse range of understandings of food security in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. Whilst this finding makes an obvious contribution to academic understanding of how the farming community are understanding and interpreting the food security agenda, it also acts as a salutary warning to the wider research community and policy makers alike, that amongst the farming community, there is not a clear and common definition of food security. Therefore, on a practical level, further research with farmers on the topic will need to be sensitive to this disparity, and make terms clear to participants how the research understands the term. Furthermore, future policy documentation (or similar) aimed at the farming community would likely need to explicitly define what it means by the term.

9.2.3 Bringing the Potential Successor into Focus

In response to the confusion surrounding exactly who the successor is and the subsequent lack of explicit engagement with the next generation, Chapter 4 presented a working definition of who the potential successor is. Given the importance of a next generation of farmers to the industry's propensity to adapt to and succeed in responding to the challenges of the future, we need, now more than ever, to enhance our understanding of the intentions of potential successors. By distinguishing the potential successor as specific research subject and promoting engagement with them, it is hoped it will improve the accuracy, and depth, of our understanding of the likely availability of a next generation of farmers.

Whilst the conceptual framework was intended to allow for the easy identification of and subsequent engagement with the potential successor within *this* research, it is hoped the distinction offered by the framework presented in this thesis and elsewhere (see Chiswell, 2014) will encourage further engagement with the potential successor as an autonomous actor in other research contexts. It is also hoped it will facilitate a more well-rounded and widely informed understanding of the process of succession.

Aside from the specific scope of this research, which has sought generally to give the potential next generation a voice, regardless of their current degree of commitment to succession, the additional difference between the *Possible* and *Prospective Successor* presented as part of this definition, also highlights them as distinct and autonomous research subjects. For example, the experiences, attitudes and intentions of a *Possible Successor*, who merely, by virtue of a kin relationship to the farmers, is *assumed* to be the future successor, could potentially differ greatly to someone who has expressed their intention to succeed and is actively moving towards managerial control. Not only does conceptualisation offer a new way of understanding the process of successor identification, it is also envisioned that this further distinction made between the *Possible* and *Prospective Successor* has the potential to inform the future design of data collection methods pertaining to farm succession status, resulting in a much more nuanced understanding.

For example, rather than simply categorising farmers as either having or not having a successor, farmers can be categorised as having a *Possible Successor*, *Prospective Successor* or no successor. Although no succession is ever guaranteed, it has long been observed that the succession of the prospective successor, who is (actively) moving towards managerial control, is perhaps most assured (Fennell, 1981); on the basis of this, we can obtain a more telling insight into the future likelihood of succession, linked strongly to the overall health of the industry.

More widely speaking, by distinguishing between the *Possible Successor* and the *Prospective Successor*, the framework has potential to enhance the effectiveness of the targeting and delivery of government or non-government organisation future support. By distinguishing between the *Possible* and the *Prospective Successor*, there is potential for farm families to be ‘matched up’ with resources or services that suit their specific circumstances, with the aim of increasing the chances of effective succession. For example, whilst strategies that encourage a greater understanding of the range of rewarding opportunities offered by farming as a career and promote farming as an aspirational career choice would be more appropriately targeted at *Possible Successors*, the *Prospective Successor*, who is (actively) moving towards managerial control of the farm, and the farmer who (s)he will succeed, are likely to benefit from advice on managing the transfer of managerial control and the farmer’s transition into retirement, to ultimately reduce the likelihood of the ‘farmer’s boy’ route, so typical in England (Lobley *et al*, 2010).

Ultimately, it is hoped that this discussion, and the distinctions made by the conceptual framework, gives the academic community much to consider. As an industry, farming will have to rise to a plethora of challenges in the coming decades, and as evidence in this thesis has supported, the industry can derive real benefit from effective succession. By clearly identifying the potential successor as a distinct and autonomous research subject, it is hoped it will encourage more potential successor-focused research, which will in turn ensure a rigorous understanding of succession and, give a much needed voice to a previously neglected actor.

9.2.4 Succession Status and The Succession Effect

Besides these wider and hopefully long-lasting benefits of the proposed framework, by engaging directly with potential successors as well as incumbent farmers, unlike previous investigations into succession status (which have tended to rely solely on farmers’ understandings), this research has been able to confidently deduce the succession status of farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. A key finding of the analysis was the number of farms with an identified potential successor. Only 1 out of the 26 farmers had failed to identify a potential successor and, similarly *none* of the participating potential successors had completely ruled out succeeding to the farm. This is an positive and pivotal finding given the proposed importance of a willing next generation, and in line with previous work by Lobley and colleagues (Lobley *et al*, 2002; Lobley *et al*, 2005a;

Lobley *et al* 2010; Lobley, 2010), contributes to dismiss widely propagated (although only colloquial) concerns (see Ward and Lowe, 1994; Ward, 1996) that the UK is enduring a crisis in succession. Although these are positive figures, it is important to consider that whilst farmers were recruited for interviews regardless of their succession status, farmers with potential successors, and for whom succession is not a 'sore subject', would have perhaps been more amenable to participating in the research. This suggests research involving farm families who have not been able to identify a potential successor, including talking to their children/grandchildren etc. who had ruled out succession, would be a valuable avenue for further research.

Specifically, as described in Chapter 7, a total of 10 out of the 26 farmers interviewed were confident they would have a successor, a further 10 were what was described in the discussion as *realistically hopeful* about having a successor, and for the remaining 5, it was simply too early to tell, primarily due to having young children. Similarly, as demonstrated in Chapter 8, 10 out of the 19 potential successors interviewed were confident they would succeed, and a further 4 believed this to be a strong possibility. Of the remaining 5, 3 were too young to have decided what they wanted to do and the fourth, despite wanting to, was unable to commit to long-term involvement in the farm due to an ongoing health problem. The fifth was generally undecided, complicated by the early loss of his father. On a methodological note, as suggested in the analysis (Section 7.0), whilst previous research into succession has limited respondents to stringent status categories (e.g. Potter and Lobley, 1996a; 1996b), the freedom offered by semi-structured interviews used in this research allowed the nuances of farms' succession status to emerge, and thus strengthening our understanding of the succession status of farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes.

In the 15 instances where farmers and subsequently their potential successors were interviewed, their understandings of their own/potential successors' intentions broadly matched. There were no incidences of significantly conflicting or divergent thoughts, i.e. where the farmer was convinced the potential successor wanted to succeed to the farm, and where the potential successor had ruled this out. Whilst they broadly corresponded, analysis of interview data highlighted a subtle but notable discrepancy between a number of 'realistically hopeful' farmers and their potential successors, who were decidedly more confident about their eventual succession to the farm (Section 8.1). Not only does this discrepancy further dispel the notion of a crisis in succession and demonstrates that potential successors are even more confident in their intentions to farm than incumbent farmers, it demonstrates the importance of engaging *with* the potential successor; this subtle but important difference that enhances and focusses our understanding of the succession status of farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes would have been lost without this multi-generational approach.

In line with previous research (Potter and Lobley, 1996a; 1996b; Calus and Van Huylenbroeck, 2008, Uchiyama *et al*, 2008, Lobley *et al*, 2010), analysis of the interview data clearly demonstrates how the succession effect is very strong in the case of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, with farmers citing a range of positive changes and adaptations they had made to the farm since identifying a potential successor. Analysis revealed how, all confident or realistically hopeful farmers were able to identify at least one change, including the purchasing of land, increasing of stock levels and changing the type of stock – demonstrating a strong ‘succession effect’. Similarly, the ‘successor effect’ was clearly observed amongst participants, with farmers recalling a number of changes that their potential successors had introduced, including the introduction of technology and updating of machinery. Farmers, particularly with *Younger Potential Successors*, justified these (often significant) changes and adaptations as a way of accommodating their potential successors and subsequently ensuring their long-term involvement in the farm remained an attractive option for them.

On a theoretical note, evidence of these adaptations underscores the relevance and importance of adopting a *modified* political economy approach to understanding farmer behaviour and farm family response to wider policy or economic changes, by demonstrating how succession status and the presence of a successor can act as a key driving force in a variety changes and adaptations that may not be economically rational. Furthermore, evidence of these positive adaptations associated with the succession and successor effects is an important finding in the context of the industry’s propensity to respond to the widely propagated myriad of pressures. The food security challenge is a complex, multifaceted problem, for which there is no ‘silver bullet’, instead it requires a pluralistic approach to exploit spare capacity in farming; the progressive nature of changes evident on farms with identified potential successors and their accompanying enthusiasm, drive and willingness to invest, reinforces Lobley *et al*’s (2010: 61) assertion that “in challenging times, these two ‘effects’ are clearly in the interests of efficient farming for the business and the country”.

Despite the recent economic and environmental challenges experienced by farmers, described as many as ‘the hardest 12 months I’ve ever experienced’ (see Section 6.4.1), empirical evidence suggests that farmers with identified potential successors had continued to farm progressively; purchasing land, increasing stock levels and buying in new types of stock. This provides a stark reminder to both academics and policy makers alike that farmers do not respond to policy and market signals in the way we would broadly anticipate and secondly, reiterates the longstanding observation that succession status is a powerful variable in farmer behaviour and thus the trajectory of the farm (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011; Viaggi *et al*, 2011; Winter, 2000; Price and Conn, 2012; Potter and Lobley, 1992a).

Whilst this understanding of the influence of succession status has been used to understand farm families' *responses* to the decoupling of the CAP (Sottomayor *et al*, 2011; Viaggi *et al*, 2011), *post-policy* reform, we need to start using this understanding to anticipate and incorporate the impact of succession status into future policy measures *from the start*. Although specific food security policy measures are still in their infancy, with much of the science likely to underpin policy currently too immature (Lobley and Winter, 2009), considering how family farms are likely to respond to calls for sustainable intensification on the ground needs to be an integral facet of policy design. Although a rudimentary example, policy measures that incentivise production will need to be sensitive to and anticipate how farmers without successors may react (or perhaps not react at all), compared with those who have identified a next generation.

This understanding of the influence of succession status also has the potential to encourage and inform development of schemes and initiatives, such as the *Fresh Start Initiative Cornwall* (see Ingram and Kirwan, 2011; Ilbery *et al*, 2012), that match farmers without successors with those wishing to enter farming, thus harnessing benefits of the succession effect where they would have previously been lost, as well as and simultaneously facilitating and unlocking the benefits of the 'new blood effect'. This is of particular interest given that these kind of policy interventions have to date, offered *limited scope* in stimulating farm transfer in the UK context (Ingram and Kirwan, 2011; Ilbery *et al*, 2012).

Whilst the succession status of farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes is a positive finding, as discussed in Chapter 3 identification of a willing next generation alone is not enough (Lobley *et al*, 2010). In the context of the increasing and multifarious demands on the industry, it is 'effective succession', measured firstly in terms of the existence of a successor, *as well as* the 'smoothness' of the transfer of managerial control from which benefit can be derived from.

9.2.5 The Transfer of Managerial Control: (Potential) Implications for Food Security

Having confidently established the succession status of participating farms in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, in response to claims we know relatively little about the actual process of succession (Dyck *et al*, 2002), this research explored the transfer of managerial control between generations on participating farms.

Whilst this research clearly identified the transfer of managerial control involved ascending the 'succession ladder' for a number of potential successors, the existence and ascension of a clearly delineated ladder of increasing responsibility was found to be an irrelevant representation for an equally significant number. To this end, two distinct cohorts were observed amongst participating farms.

The first of which, described as *Conservative Farms*, was characterised by a clear delineation of the ladder of increasing responsibility, with control over managerial tasks such as the finances, very much an unobtainable pinnacle during the farmers' lifetime. As demonstrated using the interview data, farmers on these *Conservative Farms* were notably reluctant to delegate responsibilities to their potential successors, who were largely excluded from 'higher rung' responsibilities, such as the farm finances, and continuously postponed succession or estate planning, for many years in some cases. This reluctance to relinquish control was further amplified by potential successors' striking levels of appreciation and sensitivity of the importance of the farm and farming to the incumbent farmer.

Although *Conservative Potential Successors* were not themselves concerned about their eventual ability to manage the farm, commentators have long suggested, exclusion from higher rung tasks, such as that observed in the preceding analysis, means the successor is therefore inadequately prepared to maintain the same level of business performance after the farmer retires or dies. Whilst this belief is understandably upheld by a number of academics in the succession field (Weston, 1977; Hastings, 1984; Gasson and Errington, 1993; Errington 2002), this research has identified an absence of empirical data from the family farming research to support this (albeit logical) notion, meaning we know little about the *extent* of these implications. Given the challenges the industry faces, a clearer understanding and quantification of the impacts of the exclusion of potential successors from higher rung tasks through longitudinal research examining both the transfer of managerial control and the post-handover performance of the farm and competences of the successor, would make a welcomed area of future research.

In the absence of family farm business-specific evidence, this research used wider family business literature to highlight the threat of *Conservative* farmers' reluctance to delegate responsibilities to the potential successor, and unwillingness to plan for succession, to their successors' eventual ability to manage the farm and the farms' subsequent longevity. It concludes how, multiplied up, this kind of transfer represents a tangible threat to successors' abilities to farm for food security and the industry's ability to respond to the increasing plethora of demands on it. Although this research has made important headway in detailing the processes of the transfer of managerial control, highlighting, how a significant number of potential successors were amiably waiting for 'their time to come' and posited as to the *likely* impact of this on their future ability to manage the family farm, the temporal scope of the research prevented further investigation into the actual *impact* of the means of the transfer of managerial control on the post-transition successor ability and subsequent farm business performance. This is undoubtedly an important avenue for future, longitudinal research.

In contrast, for the second cohort, described as *Progressive Farms*, the idea of a clearly delineated ladder of increasing responsibility was largely non-applicable. Instead, *Progressive Potential Successors* were involved in an impressive range of activities and held a number of notable responsibilities, including financial decisions. The nature of their involvement differed too; instead of working *for* the farmer, potential successors were genuinely influential and instrumental in the farm business. The ‘succession matrix’ was proposed as an alternative and more accurate way of understanding the transfer of managerial control for these potential successors. Unlike the ladder of increasing responsibility, the matrix does not rank or prioritise tasks or activities according to the level of responsibility, but conceptualises how *Progressive Potential Successors* enjoy involvement and responsibility across a range of tasks. Strikingly, unlike their *Conservative* counterparts, *Progressive Potential Successors* often challenged their fathers if they were not satisfied with their involvement, or wanted to introduce a new way of doing things; this further amplified the successor effect, with many of these potential successors bringing in new ideas and suggestions from their recent experiences of agricultural or agriculturally-relevant courses or other work experience. As well as this willingness to delegate tasks and responsibilities to their potential successors, analysis revealed how, in contrast to the *Conservative* cohort, farmers in this group looked forward to retirement and had set a particular retirement age.

Observation of the existence of this *Progressive* cohort and the way in which their experiences differ to the prevailing understanding of the transfer of managerial control and the succession ladder (Gasson and Errington, 1993; Errington, 2002; Lobley *et al*, 2010) adds to, and furthers, the literature on the transfer of managerial control in the family farm.

As suggested in Chapter 7 (section 7.3.3) these differences are attributed to the age of the potential successors and broad societal transition from classic modernity to a ‘transformed modernity’ (Gullestad, 1997) or ‘late modernity’ (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1994). This shift, that became increasingly prevalent towards the end of the 1970s, transformed society from one of ‘duty’, during which, survival of the farm would have been more important than their rights as an individual (Silvasti, 2012), to a ‘market place of opportunity’, characterised by free choice and prioritisation of the individual. So whilst *Conservative Potential Successors*, born in the 1960s and 1970s, followed a clearly delineated path or *direct route* into farming, adhering to the ‘family story’, analysis revealed how younger *Progressive Potential Successors*, born in the 1980s and 1990s and consequently encouraged by their parents to decide what they wanted to do, sought a variety of *short-term diversion routes*, involving a variety of experiences and pursuits, *before* returning to the farm, having decided to.

Having pursued a *short-term diversion* (including non-agricultural jobs, travelling and University), before deciding to return to the farm, incumbent farmers of *Progressive Potential Successors* were

realistically fearful of their potential successors being ‘tempted away’ by off-farm careers. In contrast to their older counterparts, who described a very limited set of experiences, their vast experiences and qualifications afforded by this emergent foregrounding of the individual has made them incredibly employable beyond farming. As a result, incumbent farmers described the need to delegate responsibilities, unreservedly engaging their potential successors in the farm, through a credible fear they would be tempted away.

The impact of younger potential successors’ wider experiences extends beyond the way managerial control is transferred, but also influenced the farmer-potential successor relationship. Their upbringing, predicated on choice and increasingly unimpeded by obligations, as well as their wealth of life experiences which have diluted the potency of typically restrictive emotionally driven family relationships, meant they were able to negotiate with and challenge the incumbent. Furthermore, their wider experiences had inadvertently opened their parents’ eyes to the possibilities of ‘new arenas’, including places, lifestyles and experiences, with implications for their willingness to retire.

Given the various demands on the industry associated with achieving food security, particularly the increasing emphasis on agricultural productivity and development of sustainable systems of production, this research concludes that benefit can be derived from the *Progressive* transfer of managerial control. Potential successors’ experiences during ‘short-term diversions’ form a key facet in accelerating and intensifying the successor effect, as well as being conducive with benefits such as successor propensity to introduce new techniques, adequate levels of potential successor preparation and subsequent post-handover confidence, ability and ensuing business performance. Although to crystallise this understanding, research on the impacts of the various modes of transfer observed in this thesis and their outcomes, are much needed.

This difference between *Conservative* and *Progressive* farms is an important finding. Firstly, as suggested above, it firstly adds to and brings the research field ‘up to date’ by recognising the logistics of the transfer of managerial control amongst this emergent group.

Secondly, it reaffirms earlier suggestions that slow or conservative transfers of managerial control, accompanied by a failure to plan for succession, could potentially be problematic for the industry. By broadly highlighting that it is this cohort of *Older Potential Successors* and their corresponding incumbent farmers that are generally facing these difficulties, it has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the targeting and delivery of government and/or non-government organisation support; specifically, schemes that encourage succession planning, facilitate and encourage the appropriate and timely delegation of tasks and responsibilities, and provide general support for the farmer during the evidently difficult transition, as well as empowering the potential successor.

The emergence of more *Progressive* transfers, and particularly the evident impact of potential successors' short term diversions on the progressiveness of the transfer of managerial control is another important finding. Specifically, by prompting incumbent farmers to delegate responsibilities to their worldly and employable potential successors, as well as connecting farmers themselves to new arenas and lifestyles, short term diversions appear to be an effective solution to the slow transfer of managerial control, and ultimately the inability of potential successors to continue running a progressive and efficient farm business, post-succession. Ultimately, understanding of the benefits of the short term diversion to the transfer of managerial control and the (anticipated) eventual impacts on post-transition farm business resilience could be used to inform the design of post-compulsory agricultural education and courses, incorporating opportunities for potential successors to take short term diversions into the course structure. The 'power' of the short term diversion is perhaps even more pertinent in the context of the longstanding and dramatic increases in land price increases in the UK, that have risen by 210 per cent in the last decade alone (The Guardian Online, 2014b), which have meant the once numerous succession routes observed by Gasson and Errington (1993), such as the *separate enterprise* and even the *standby holding* are now largely financially unobtainable and are increasingly forcing farmers and their potential successors to work together on the home farm in greater numbers than ever before.

Whilst these suggestions are true to the experiences of farmers and potential successors interviewed in Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, it is critical to note that not every young potential successor would have pursued a short-term diversion route, and even if they have, this may not necessarily translate into a progressive transfer of managerial control, which can be determined by a wide range of (often less 'visible') factors, such as family relationships, individual personalities.

9.2.6 Potential Successors: Motivations and Understandings

Further analysis of interview data revealed the impact of potential successors' respective routes into farming was not simply limited to the way in which managerial control is being transferred between the generations, but also appeared to broadly shape what was motivating potential successors' to want to farm.

This thesis concludes how, as a result of the wider societal changes, the way in which farmers' children 'become' farmers has and is changing. Whilst, *Older Potential Successors* had similar motivations to incumbent farmers' (outlined in Chapter 6), in that they were 'born to be farmers', subtly *socialised* to fulfil their role in the 'family story', with little opportunity to (want to) do anything other than farming, *Younger Potential Successors* appeared as a distinct and emerging group for whom farming is not simply an inherited occupation, but a conscious decision. In

contrast to the longstanding belief that farming is simply ‘in the blood’ that underpins *earlier* understandings of the process, shaped by their upbringing and their subsequent *short-term* diversions, *Younger Potential Successors* were actively considering and overtly weighing-up their respective futures in farming in the context of their various experiences and resulting opportunities. As ‘qualitative evaluators’, *Younger Potential Successors* were comparing factors such as financial security offered by farming and the type of lifestyle it would offer, compared to other career opportunities open to them. Although still influential, familial and emotional connections are becoming increasingly moribund for this group. Many motivations were framed with direct reference to wider food security discourse, including improvements in public perception of the industry and farming as a career, as well as the general positivity characterising the industry at the moment, although *Younger Potential Successors* failed to anticipate any great financial reward for farming for food security. In its most basic sense, identification of this group and documentation of their experiences as evaluators is a significant shift away from the ‘classic’ experiences of farmers and *Older Potential Successors* and demonstrates how the process of ‘successor creation’ is changing. This highlights the need to further expound the nature of these changes, as well as consider how, long-term, these changes are likely to change the nature of family farm succession in the UK; if potential successors are largely unimpeded by familial obligations and tradition, what will this mean for the sustainability of the family farm? This question is of particular interest given the importance of family farm systems to the overall health of the industry. Furthermore, the inclusion of the food security agenda and its implications for the industry as a factor in potential successors’ evaluation, adds important insight to our understanding of how the farming community are understanding and interpreting the agenda, ultimately suggesting, the food security agenda *is motivating potential successors to want to farm*.

Chapter 8 situated this positivity in the context of the wider picture using agricultural course enrolment data, and suggests that the *renaissance in agriculture* is also inspiring and motivating *Younger Potential Successors* beyond the study area.

Understanding of *Younger Potential Successors* as qualitative evaluators, who unlike previous generations, are taking intrinsic factors into consideration, suggests that measures that portray farming positively and boost the image of farming as a career i.e. recruitment campaigns and events, targeted at farm children, are likely to have notable impact amongst *Younger Potential Successors* and have the potential to be an effective measure, should there be a genuine recruitment crisis of familial successors.

Like participating farmers, potential successors had organically demonstrated a good understanding of the term in many aspects of the interview, but failed to match these ideas with the term, when later explicitly asked to define it. Similarly, they also understood the term to mean a

variety of different things, and where it was understood ‘correctly’, there were varying levels of understanding, attributable to the variety of dimensions to the term and its various uses in political debate. This diversity in understanding has implications for academic understanding of how future farmers are understanding and interpreting the term, and alerts both the academic and political communities to the fact that there is no clear understanding of the term amongst potential successors, with implications for the way the term is introduced and utilised in subsequent communications with them. Although this research has provided an initial insight into the variety of understandings of the term, further large-scale quantitative research is needed to explore understandings and extrapolate reasons for the diversity.

9.3 Methodological Reflections

Although involving the typical challenges of any people-based research in the social sciences, overall, the method was felt to be a success. Accessing and recruiting willing participants was a big challenge of the work, overcome by spending time in the area, keeping up to date with what was going on in the villages and networking with key local people. The use of the NFS as both a recruitment tool and interview aid proved *very valuable*, with many participants genuinely roused by the prospect of access to the Survey documents relating to their farm, and detailed discussion subsequently flowed from the documents. Use of the NFS was also felt to relieve much of the power imbalance inherent to the researcher-participant relationship in an interview, giving the participants something to focus on, on which they were generally the ‘expert’, and also meant they also got something out of the interview as a reward for giving up their time. Although used as part of this research into succession, use of NFS in this way lends itself to other research into a variety of both historical and contemporary family farm, agricultural and land use issues.

9.4 Limitations of the Research

Although a deliberate decision was taken to focus the research in a limited geographical area for consistency and to afford the detail necessary to understand intricacies of succession, limitations of the research are generally associated with the wider geographical value and applicability of the research findings, particularly given the difficulties of farm land typical of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, and the implications for family farming in the area.

Secondly, only one participating farmer had failed to identify a potential successor. Whilst it is possible to suggest that the lack of farmers in this situation was representative of the broader trend in succession status, i.e. only 1 in 26 farmers have failed to identify a potential successor, it is more likely attributable to the fact that farmers in this situation would have been less willing to participate in the research, with succession representing a ‘sore subject’ for them, particularly when the longstanding importance and tradition associated with intergenerational farm transfer is

taken into consideration. Similarly, although a deliberate decision was taken to *just* interview potential successors (including both possible and prospective successors) – for whom succession had not been ruled out – the research would have benefited from interviewing those who had categorically chosen not to farm, giving an insight into their reasoning.

Although it is important to consider these limitations, it is also imperative to understand, given the sensitive and personal nature of the topic of succession, as well as the demands on farmers' time, the number of participants involved in the research, the information they privileged the researcher to and the time which they devoted to it, means it was largely a success.

9.5 Recommendations for Further Study

Many recommendations for further study have been discussed in conjunction with the key findings. They are summarised as follows:

- Research involving farm families who have not been able to identify a potential successor, including their children/grandchildren etc. who had ruled out succession – this would counterbalance one of the limitations outlined directly above.
- Longitudinal research examining both the transfer of managerial control and the post-handover performance of the farm and competences of the successor.
- Further large-scale quantitative research to explore diversity of understandings of the term food security and extrapolate reasons for the diversity in understanding.

Furthermore, now this research has offered a working definition of the potential successor, further research focusing on their intentions, motivations and where applicable, experiences of the transfer of managerial control would be of value in *different locations*. It would be particularly valuable in contrasting farming areas of the UK, such as East Anglia where farms are typically (significantly) larger, more mechanised, and arable and would be useful in developing a more holistic understanding of succession and particularly of succession in the context of the delivery of food security objectives.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

This thesis began with the assumption that, “without significant innovation and adaptation in capacities to produce, distribute and exchange food, humanity faces a bleak and divided future in rising to emerging demographic trends and patterns of economic development” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 42). As a key stakeholder in delivering food security objectives, this research focused on the role of the family farm and highlighted the potential influence of intergenerational farm transfer on their propensity to respond to these challenges. It has highlighted the potential benefit to be derived from successor identification and a progressive transfer of managerial control, both during

the handover process and after; an influence that the academic community need to further examine, and equally policy makers will need to take into consideration when putting food security policy in place, on the ground. Having engaged with the potential successor directly, the thesis has, with these benefits in mind, identified a throng of committed and enthusiastic potential successors. Furthermore, it has identified the way that the farm is passed through the family is changing; becoming less about tradition and ascribed roles and increasingly about choice over time. As a result of this change, younger potential successors are beginning to take a wealth of intrinsic factors into consideration, and are in part, unequivocally motivated by the industry's renewed standing, opportunities and challenges associated with the emergent food security agenda – the so called *renaissance in agriculture*.

Appendix

Appendix 1 Introduction to my research and request for participants in the Hatherleigh Parish Pump Newsletter (2012) - article highlighted



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Northlew Doodlebugs
Our ecumenical Children's Group will be meeting again this month.
'The Walls of Jericho'
Come and have fun finding out how the walls of Jericho fell down.
Saturday 27th October 2012
3-4pm, Methodist Chapel
followed by light refreshments
Everyone Welcome.

From the Parish Records
August 19th Baptism of Noah Cooper Veron, second son of Michael and Tricia.
September 16th Baptism of Esme Rose Andrew, daughter of Kathryn and Christopher.
Allotment Produce Show

Northlew Community Allotment Village Show was held on September 8th and was a very successful and happy occasion. Despite the poor growing season entries were up on last year and the standard high. It is really great to see a produce show in the village once again and it will doubt grow year on year. Julie James, who organised this year's show, says that new ideas for next year's event are always welcome. Many thanks to Julie and others for all their hard work.

More Thanks

While in a thanking mood, this is a chance to thank Jean and Den Adams for acting as a collection point, for approximately the past four years, for prescriptions from Okehampton Medical Centre. This has been a great help to lots of people in and around the village. Thank you!

Other issues

Research Participants Needed

Let me introduce myself. My name is Hannah Chiswell and I am a researcher at the Centre for Rural Policy Research, at Exeter University. As part of my Doctoral studies into the next generation of farming, I am focusing on Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes, and will be writing to many of you, particularly farmers, in the coming weeks, to request your participation in interviews. Supervised by Professor Michael Winter, I

Coffee Morning

December 1st Christmas Coffee Morning 10:30 - 12. Coffee and mince pies, Raffle for super Christmas hamper, big family tin of chocolates, and other goodies.

Bangers and Mash

January 25th more details to follow.

Antiques Roadshow with Cider & Pasties

Wednesday 3rd October
in Old Schoolroom, Monkokehampton
7pm for 7.30 start.
Bring your antique items to be valued, no furniture please.
£5 entrance to include refreshments.
All proceeds to church funds.

am a year in to my research and really looking forward to going out into the field this year.

As an introduction to the area, I have spent the last few weeks using National Farm Survey data from the early 1940s to construct individual farm histories, including maps, which I hope this will be of interest to many of you.

You are likely to see me in the area of the coming months (hopefully not looking too lost!), so feel free to come and talk to me. If anyone has any questions about what I am doing, or would like to know more, feel free to contact me (H.M Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk or 07795566639).

MONKOKEHAMPTON

Hallowe'en


It's been decided to cancel our usual Hallowe'en evening - it falls in the middle of half term, so several families will be away. But please make a note to support forthcoming events at the Old Schoolroom!

Race Night

November 16th bet on your favoured horse! £1 entrance, refreshments available.
First race 8pm.

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Appendix 2 The study parishes: some basic information

Hatherleigh

The parish of Hatherleigh is a small market town, located in the district of West Devon with population of 1,854 (Devon County Council, 2012). Hatherleigh hosts a weekly farmers market, selling sheep, cattle and poultry. It has three pubs, The Bridge Inn, The Tally Ho and The George and has a good selection of local amenities including a convenience store, a bank, a hairdressers, newsagents, café, Post Office and Primary School. Hatherleigh is an active community, with over 40 clubs and societies, a local community website and a monthly newsletter which is delivered to residents of Hatherleigh, Meeth, Exbourne, Monkokehampton, Northlew and Jacobstowe.

Iddesleigh

Iddesleigh is located in the district of West Devon and has a population of just 198 (Devon County Council, 2012). The parish has a pub, called the Duke of York, and a craft shop selling locally produced arts and crafts.

Monkokehampton

The parish of Monkokehampton, also located in the district of West Devon, has a population of just 139 (Devon County Council, 2012).

Broadwoodkelly

The parish of Broadwoodkelly, also located in the district of West Devon, has a population of just 251 (Devon County Council, 2012).

Winkleigh

With a population of 1,643 (Devon County Council, 2012), Winkleigh describes itself as “a rural retreat, small enough to retain its unique traditions, but large enough to boast a vibrant village community” (Winkleigh Online, 2010). Unlike the other four parishes, Winkleigh is located in the Torridge district. The parish has two pubs, a Post Office, a fishmonger, a convenience store, a Doctor’s surgery and a vets, as well as a community centre, village hall, sports centre, church and a primary school. The Winkleigh Young Farmers Club is also based in Winkleigh. In 2011, ‘Wonderful Winkleigh’ was named ‘best place to raise a family’ (Telegraph Online, 2011).

Appendix 3 GIS glossary of terms

Attribute Table: A database file containing information about a set of geographic features, usually arranged so that each row represents a feature and each column represents one feature attribute. In a GIS, attribute tables are often joined or related to spatial data layers, and the attribute values they contain can be used to find, query, and symbolize features.

Attributes: Non-graphical descriptors relating to geographical features or entities in a GIS.

Digitising: A process which creates a new spatially referenced dataset by tracing over existing digital features.

Geodatabase: A database used to store, query and manipulate spatial data. Many types of geographic datasets can be collected within a geodatabase, including feature classes and attribute tables.

Geographic Coordinate System: A reference system that uses points of latitude and longitude to define locations of points on the Earth's surface.

Georeferencing: The process of defining a digital image within a real world coordinate system.

Ground Control Points (GCPs): Points on the Earth's surface of known locations, such as road intersections or corners of buildings, which are used to georeference image data sources, such as scanned maps or pictures.

Root Mean Square (RMS) Error: A measure of the difference between known locations and locations that have been digitized. The higher the RMS error, the higher the inconsistency between the linked points.

Vector: A coordinate-based data model that represents geographic features as points, lines and polygons. Attributes are linked or associated with each vector feature, unlike a raster data model, which associates attributes with specific grid cells.

Appendix 4 Example farm portfolio (including NFS tables and maps)

Farmer	Details
Holding Name	Coombe Farm
Farmer	R.Cleverdon
Crops and Grass	Statute Acres
Wheat	
Barely	
Oats	14
Mixed Corn with Wheat in mixture	
Mixed Corn without Wheat in mixture	14.5
Rye	
Beans, winter or spring for stock feeding	
Peas, for stock feeding, not for human consumption	
Potatoes, first earlies	
Potatoes, main crop and second earlies	2
Turnips and Swedes, for fodder	
Mangolds	
Sugar Beet	
Kale, for fodder	
Rape (or Cole)	
Cabbage, Savoys, and Kohl Rabi, for fodder	
Vetches or Tares	
Lucerne	
Mustard, for seed	
Mustard, for fodder or ploughing in	
Flax, for fibre or linseed	
Hops	
Orchards, with crops, fallow, or grass below the trees	1
Orchards, with small fruit below the trees	
Small fruit not under orchards	
Vegetables for human consumption (excluding Potatoes), Flowers and Crops	
Bare Fallow	
Clover, Sainfoin and Temporary Grasses for Mowing this season	6
Clover, Sainfoin and Temporary Grazing (not for Mowing this season)	15
Permanent Grass for Mowing this season	5.5
Permanent Grass for Grazing (not for Mowing this season) but excluding Rough Grazings	36.5
Total of Above Items (excluding Rough Grazings)	94.5

Labour	Numbers
Whole time regular workers	1
Casual (seasonal or part time) workers	1
Total Workers	2

Livestock	Number
Total Cattle and Calves	23
Total Sheep and Lambs	141
Total Pigs	2
Total Poultry	83
Total Goats	
Total Horses	2

Other Information	Details
Tenure	Owner Occupied
Grade	A

Appendix 5 Letter to local farmers



CENTRE FOR RURAL POLICY RESEARCH

College of Social Sciences and International Studies
Amory Building
Rennes Drive
Exeter UK EX4 4RJ

t +44 (0) 1392 722438
f +44 (0) 1392 723305
e crprmail@exeter.ac.uk
w www.exeter.ac.uk/centres/crpr

[DATE]

RE: Research Participation Request

Dear [Farmer's name],

I am a PhD researcher based in the Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter. I am investigating the importance of the family farm in shaping the delivery of the impending food security agenda. I am focusing my study within a small number of localities in Devon, including [location].

Part of the work will involve interviewing farmers and their (potential) successors about their understandings and attitudes towards the future of farming. I am writing to request your and/or your (potential) successor's assistance in my research. I am particularly interested to talk the following:

- Farmers **with** an identified successor or successors;
- Farmers who are **unsure** about whether they have a successor or not (it maybe too early to tell, or the potential successor such as the son or daughter maybe away at University or currently in another job);
- Farmers who have **ruled out** succession through the absence of a willing successor.
- Any **willing** potential successors and **undecided** potential successors, over the age of 18, who may or may not work on the farm at present

As part of my work I am constructing a detailed history of farms in the area, using the 1940s National Farm Survey. In exchange for your participation in a 60-90 minute interview, as a small token of my gratitude, a detailed history of your farm, including key historical data and maps, would be given to you.

I am aware of how busy you are likely to be and am therefore happy to arrange dates and times around your schedule. As part of my wider research I will be spending a lot of time in the area, meaning I am available to meet at any point during the day, as well as during evenings and weekends. If you would just like to know a bit more information about what being involved in the research would entail or just want to know a bit more about what I am doing, feel free to contact me on the details below at any time.

Many thanks,

Hannah Chiswell

Mobile: 07795566639
Email: H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix 6 Farmer interview questions

(A) Farmer Succession Experience

How did you come to be the farmer here?

Farmer from a Post-1940s Farming Family

“The NFS records show in the 1940s the farm was owned by how and when did your family start farming here and how did you come to be ‘the farmer’ here?”

Farmer from a Pre-1940s Farming Family

“The NFS records show your family were here in the 1940s, **when** did your family start farming here?”

“The farm has obviously been passed down through a number of generations of your family, so how did you come to be ‘the farmer’ here?” Starting from the 1940s...

All Farmers

- Who did you take over from? How did this work? Did you work here? Did you live here? Were you paid? How long did it take?
- How did you find the process? Did it give you enough freedom?
- Was there a formal succession plan?
- Were you the only possible successor? Why were you chosen?
- Did you have other siblings or other possible successors in the family?
- How and when did you take over the farm (gain managerial control)?
- Was it a gradual process or sudden? Can you talk me through how you achieved managerial control of the farm?

Did you want to farm?

Wanted to farm

- Why did you choose to farm? (family ties, lack of other opportunities, enjoyment)
- Did your family’s time on the land have an influence on your decision to farm?
 - Did you experience any pressure?
 - How would it have been received if you didn’t want to farm?
- Did you want to do anything instead?

“The NFS records show your family were here in the 1940s, the farm has obviously been passed down from generation to generation. Did this influence your decision to farm? How?”

Didn’t want to farm

- Why didn’t you want to farm?
- What did you want to do instead?
- Did your family’s time on the land have an influence on your decision to farm?

“The NFS records show your family were here in the 1940s [and you stated earlier that your family have been on the farm since the 1900s], the farm has obviously been passed down from generation to generation. Did this influence your decision to farm? How?”

(B) The Farm

The NFS data shows the total area of the farm was acres in the 1940s.
What is the farm size today?

Which description best fits your type of farming?

How many people are working in your business, including yourself and your family?

- Full-time
- Part-time

How would you describe the current situation of the business?

How would you describe the economic prospects of the business, for the next 5-10 years?

- Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Bad

Can you mark the boundaries of your farm onto the OS Map?

(C) The Farmer

What is your age?

Role in the business (sole trader, partner, manager, other)

Have you had any formal education or training *since* leaving school?

If yes, what? eg. NVQs, Degree

Were any of these courses or qualifications related to agriculture?

What courses were these?

(D) Succession Status and Plans

Do you have a successor?

Farmers Who Have Identified a Successor (or are Undecided)

Who have you identified as your successor(s)?

- Can you tell me more about them:
 - How old are they? What relationship to you are they? What's their highest level of formal education?
- Do you have any other 'potential' successors? eg. younger sons, or daughters
 - If yes, why did you identify them as a successor and not one of the others?
- **When did you identify them as your potential successor?**
- Have you agreed this with them and your family/wider family?

- Do you have a succession plan?

How, if at all, has your business changed since [the time when the potential successor was identified]?

- If yes, when did you make those changes?
- Has having a successor encouraged you to make changes to the business? Why do you think this?

Does your potential successor currently work on the farm?

➤ *Potential Successor Works on Farm*

Can you describe how you divide up the work tasks/roles/responsibilities?

- Why is the work divided in this way?
- Describe a typical day

Has your potential successor completed any formal training?

- What? Where?
- Why are they taking this training?

➤ *Potential Successor Does Not Work on Farm*

Have they ever worked on the farm?

They Have Previously Worked on the Farm

- Can you tell me more about their time working here? What kind of work did they do when they worked on the farm? When did they leave? Why did they leave? Where do they work now? Is it connected to agriculture? Have you agreed a set time for their return?

They Have Not Previously Worked on the Farm

- Have they ever worked on any farm? Will they undertake a period of formal or informal training before gaining managerial control?

Farmers Who Have Ruled Out Succession

Why do you not have a successor?

What do you think will happen to the farm?

All Farmers

Was it important to you to identify a successor?

- Was it important to you to identify a successor?

- With direct reference to the NFS maps and data where applicable; Is this influenced by your family's time on the land?

Do you think farming, as a career, offers a better/same/worse opportunity for your potential successor(s), than it did you, when you started farming?

- Why?
- [Read Quotes] – Do you agree?

What is your understanding of the term Food Security?

- [Introduce Formal Definition]
- How do you think this challenge will change the farming industry?
- What do you think this will mean for farming at the individual farm level?
 - Do you think these population increases will translate into better returns for farmers?
 - Do you think farmers are beginning to be valued again?

Many commentators believe 'factory farms' will be the key to addressing this challenge – what role do you think the small family farm will play in delivering food security?

- Do you think the food security challenge will influence other potential farm successors in their decisions? How so?

Appendix 7 Potential successor interview questions

(A) Farm History

Introduce 1940s farm...

How did your family come to farm here?

Farmer from a Post-1940s Farming Family

“The NFS records show in the 1940s the farm was owned by **how** and **when** did your family start farming here?

- How has it been passed down generations?
- Why do you think it was passed down in this way?

Farmer from a Pre-1940s Farming Family

“The NFS records show your family were here in the 1940s, **how** and **when** did your family start farming here?

- How has it been passed down generations?
- Why do you think it was passed down in this way?

(B) The Successor

What is your age?

Have you had any formal education or training *since* leaving school?

If yes, what? eg. NVQs, Degree

Were any of these courses or qualifications related to agriculture?

What courses were these?

Who is ‘the farmer’? How are you related to the farmer?

Were you born on a farm? This farm?

(C) The Farm

How would you describe the current situation of the business?

How would you describe the economic prospects of the business, for the next 5-10 years?

- Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Bad

Can you mark the boundaries of your farm onto the OS Map?

(D) The Successor and their Intentions

Do you intend to succeed to the farm?

Willing Successors

- When did you decide this? Have you agreed this with the farmer and family/wider family?
- Have you always wanted to farm?
- Why were you selected as the potential successor, above other siblings etc.?
- Do you know if [the farmer] has a formal succession plan? What is your involvement in design/planning?
- Do you have a set time in mind when you will gain managerial control?

Why do you want to farm?

*...you said earlier your family have been farming here since [1950s] **OR** the NFS Records show your family were farming here in the 1940s...*

Has your family's time on the land been an influence in your decision to farm? How and why?

Did you feel any *pressure* from your family to succeed to the farm?

What else has influenced your decision?

- Economic prospects? Working outside? Working with animals?

Unwilling Successors

What made you decide not to succeed to the farm?

- Economic prospects? Working outside? Working with animals?
- When did you decide this?

*...you said earlier your family have been farming here since [1950s] **OR** the NFS Records show your family were farming here in the 1940s...*

Has your family's time on the land been hard to 'pull away from'? How and why?

All Potential Successors

Do you think farming, as a career, offers a better/same/worse opportunity than it did for [the current farmer] when [he/she] decided to succeed to the farm?

- Why?
- [Read Quotes] – Do you agree?

Is the idea of food security a term you are aware of? If so, what is your understanding of the term?

- [Introduce Formal Definition]
- How do you think this challenge will change the farming industry?
- What do you think this will mean for farming at the individual farm level?
- Do you think these population increases will translate into better returns for farmers?
- Do you think farmers are beginning to be valued again?

Many commentators believe ‘factory farms’ will be the key to addressing this challenge – what role do you think the small family farm will play in delivering food security?

Has the food security challenge played any part in your decision to (not) want to farm? If so, how?

- Do you think the food security challenge will influence other potential farm successors in their decisions? How so?

(D) Role in the Farm

Do you currently work on the farm?

➤ *Potential Successor Works on Farm*

Can you describe how you divide up the work/tasks/roles/responsibilities?

- Complete ‘Decision Making and Activity’ sheet
- Why is the work divided in this way?
- Do you run certain sections of the farm? Why?
- Do you get paid to work on the farm?
- Will you undertake/are you undertaking a period of formal training before gaining managerial control?

➤ *Potential Successor Does Not Work on Farm*

Have you ever worked on the farm?

They Have Previously Worked on the Farm

- When? For how long? What kind of work did you do? What do you do now? Why did you leave? When did you leave? Do you have a set time in mind for your return?

They Have Not Previously Worked on the Farm

- Have you ever worked on any farm? (If yes, When? For how long? What kind of work did you do?)
- Will you undertake a period of formal training before gaining managerial control?

Do you think you will be adequately prepared to farm for food security?

Appendix 8 ‘Renaissance’ quotes used in farmer and potential successor interviews

“If you go back 10 years, it was far more sexy for people to go into the City and other profession, but there is a much bigger appetite to go into farming now [...] the debate has moved on, where food security and the need to produce more food has come to the fore, particularly following the publication of the Foresight report.”

(Former NFU Deputy President, Meurig Raymond, March 2011)

“I can’t help noticing farmers are back in fashion!”

(Professor David Hughes of Imperial College London, 2010)

“Agriculturalists will have to be economists, commodity traders and current affair specialists. They need to know of the latest disease challenges and chemical resistances, of weather patterns in Argentina, Ukraine and New Zealand, of demographics in China, India and Africa, not to mention the national debts of our European colleagues.”

(Jonny Williams, Wales YFC Rural Affairs vice chairman, April 2012)

Widely published academics, Whitehead, Lobley and Baker have begun to talk about the *renaissance in agriculture*, which they claim “will undoubtedly influence the minds of potential successors”.

(Whitehead, Lobley and Baker, 2012)

“The world faces a crisis in food security as the global population is expected to grow from about 6.9 billion to more than 9 billion by mid-century. The FAO has predicted that demand for food will grow by 50% by 2030 and 70% by 2050 [...] therefore the challenge is to meet the rising demand for food in ways that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and in the face of evolving world-wide markets and distribution mechanisms, and global climate and demographic changes. ”

(Global Food Security Group, 2011: 3)



Ref (for office use only):

Proposal for consideration by SSIS Ethics Committee

To move between sections of the form click in any of the grey fields. Each field will expand as you type or copy in your information. There is no recommended maximum limit for any of the sections contained in the form.

Name: Hannah Chiswell

Department: Politics (Centre for Rural Policy Research)

Staff or Student (*delete as appropriate*)

Students only

Name of supervisor: Professor Michael Winter and Dr Matt Lobley

"My first or second supervisor has seen a copy of the final version of this ethics application and agrees to submission in its current form"

☒ (double click on the box and change default value to 'checked')

Email: H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk

Project title: Rising to the Food Security Challenge: An Investigation into the Impact of the Food Security Agenda on Farmers and their Successors in the South West of England

Start & end date permission requested for: *Start:* September 2012 *End:* September 2013

Date submitted: 9th May 2012

Note: When completing this form be mindful that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the **ethical considerations** of the research being undertaken. As a generic form it has been constructed to cover a wide-range of different projects so some sections may not seem relevant to you. Please include the information which addresses any ethical considerations for your particular project which will be needed by the committee to approve your proposal.

SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Note: (As a guide - 750 words)

As food security has (re)emerged at the forefront of the political agenda, this research intends to **explore the linkages between the process of intergenerational succession and the incipient political agenda**. The food security agenda represents a pragmatic and technocratic challenge of how to expand the productive capacity of land in ways that are sustainable; so called 'sustainable

intensification’ (Royal Society, 2009). Ultimately “agricultural uses of land are key contexts in which emerging agendas for food security will find their material expression” (Fish *et al*, 2013: 3) therefore it is surprising that “very little attention appears yet to have been given to the impact of these discourses on farmers” (Fish *et al*, 2012: 3); an omission this research intends to address. The research builds on an abundance of previous work that pointed to the importance of the family farming and associated factors in shaping the delivery of policy. This research recognises the pivotal role farmers will assume in rising to the food security challenge; ‘positioned’ between the drivers of change and the restructuring of land, labour and capital, and champions the importance of farmers as both literal and metaphorical gate keepers.

Succession, widely understood to mean the transfer of managerial control over the use of farm business assets (Gasson and Errington, 1993), can have significant impacts on farmer behaviour. Drawing on an extensive literature review, this research strongly believes ‘effective succession’, measured firstly in terms of the existence of a successor, and secondly, according to the ‘smoothness’ of the transfer of managerial control, is strongly conducive with the delivery of the food security agenda. However, attributable to what many describe as the worst farming recession since the 1930s, the 2001/02 Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, the austere CAP reforms, the understanding of agriculture as the ‘engine of destruction of the environment’ and the changing role of agriculture in the ‘post-productive’ countryside, many commentators believe there has been a significant erosion of commitment to succession in family farming, leading to the crisis of succession.

Given the impending pressure on agriculture to ‘sustainably intensify’, the increasingly popularised notion that British farming is facing a succession crisis, is disconcerting. However, the validity of the ‘succession crisis’ is questionable: very few studies have actively engaged with successors and potential successors in their research, or explicitly explored the desires and intentions of these actors. This research therefore intends to address **the absence of ‘the successor’ from our understandings of the succession process**. In the same way that feminist scholarship has sought to correct the dominant tendency to treat farm women and farm wives as an homogenous collective, **this research recognises successors as purposeful, knowledgeable, proficient, autonomous actors** and aims to, given their importance to the delivery of the food security agenda, vocalise their understandings, attitudes and behavioural intentions, in the context of the emerging discourse. The food security challenge referred to by Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (forthcoming: 341) as “the renaissance in agriculture...will undoubtedly influence the minds of potential successors”. The research intends to build a more accurate understanding of the future rate of succession, by interviewing and observing successors. In summary, the proposed research aims to understand (i) the potential importance of the succession process in shaping the delivery of the food security agenda and, concomitantly (ii) the impact of the impending food security agenda on farmers’ and successors’ attitudes and behavioural intentions, set within the geographical context of the South West of England.

Interviewee	Target Number Interviews
Farmer	15
(Potential) successor	15 (-20)

RESEARCH METHODS

This research intends to voice operators' and (potential) successors' experiences, opinions, attitudes and intentions in the context of the food security agenda, and thus proposes to perform a **rich, in-depth qualitative study** in a small number of parishes in Devon; Hatherleigh, Iddesliegh, Monkokehampton, Broadwoodkelly and Winkleigh.

- To construct the historical understanding of the area and the role of succession in shaping the area, in addition to using historical documents, generic farm family interviews will be used, including the principal farmer and their partner/spouse and children, **over the age of 18**.
- Separate semi-structured interviews will be performed with present farm operators, and where applicable, their intended or identified successor(s), **over the age of 18**.

Interviews with the **farm operator** will seek to understand:

- How current succession status of the farm is determining the understandings, attitudes and behavioural intentions concerning the future of the farm in rising to the food security challenge;
- The current 'successor routes' in place on the farm;
- Their attitude and feelings towards passing the farm onto their successors;
- The role of availability and access to land in their plans;
- How they think the food security agenda will materialise.

Interviews with the (potential) **successor** will seek to understand:

- The current 'successor routes' in place on the farm;
- Whether the identified successor routes are adequate to prepare successors to farm;
- How the food security agenda is understood amongst potential successors;
- Their attitude and feelings towards taking on the farm;
- The role of availability and access to land in their plans;
- How they think the food security agenda will materialise.

THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Note: You should include a brief outline on how participants will be recruited and whether written consent is obtained. If written consent is not obtained, this should be justified. The submission should include the consent form.

All respondents will be recruited on a voluntary basis. Initial participants will be recruited via a small number of the researcher's personal acquaintances in the area, an advert placed in the parish newsletter and by contacting, by letter, farms from local phone and business directories. It is hoped that by successfully recruiting and working with an initial number of farm families or subjects, a snowballing sampling method will be utilised; initial families and subjects will assist in recruiting future families and/or subjects from their own acquaintances in the area.

Given the close knit community context, the researcher intends to be aware of the possibility that using a snowballing sampling method, some families or subjects may feel coerced by more powerful community members, thus resulting in them participating when they do not actually wish

to do so. Similarly, by approaching farming ‘families’, the researcher will have to be sensitive to the desires of *all* subjects to participate, as some family members may, once again, feel compelled or forced into participating. The researcher intends to be aware of these possibilities and remain sensitive throughout the recruitment and data collection process, by continuously stressing the voluntary nature of participation.

Consent will mainly be obtained in written form, although verbal consent will be used if necessary and will be recorded. This will be obtained using a standard consent form (see attached) which will cover a) confidentiality, b) anonymity, c) information about the project and d) the participant’s right to withdraw at any time. Written consent, attesting the subject voluntarily consents to participation, will be obtained using two copies of the consent form that will both be signed by both the participant and researcher; one form will be kept by the subject and the second, kept by the researcher. To ensure that *all* participants understand what they are signing, the consent form will explain the terms in a concise and understandable way. A copy of the consent form will be given to subjects the day before the interview or observation, to give them plenty of opportunity to read the form and devise any questions they feel they need to ask me.

Key elements of the Consent form:

- Confidentiality and anonymity
- The right to withdraw
- Information about the project

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Information obtained during interviews and observations will be kept *strictly* confidentially and anonymously. The ways confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved are outlined in the following section ‘Data Protection and Storage’. The researcher intends to interview principal farmers and their (potential) successor(s) separately. Given the pressure for a (potential) successor to take over the farm (or perhaps pressure not to, according to contemporary evidence), it is essential that what the successor says is kept confidentially (i.e. not available to the principal farmer or anyone else), and vice versa.

There are however, limits to the confidentiality offered. If for example, an interview or observation revealed that a participant or other identified person is in *significant and immediate* danger, the researcher will be obliged to break confidentiality. If the researcher deems this necessary, the participant will be notified, unless doing so would actually increase risk to those involved. These limits will be explained in the consent form.

The right to withdraw

The researcher appreciates the time commitment and potential harm or risks for the subject and will thus highlight their right to withdraw from the research at any point, without disadvantage to the subject. On their copy of the form, subjects will have the researcher’s University contact information, allowing them to withdraw (or ask questions) after the researcher has left the interview/observation.

Although these conditions will be outlined in the consent form, every effort will be highlight them verbally (ie. if the respondent seems to be finding the interview distressing for example) throughout the research process.

Information about the project

(see following section ‘The Informed Nature of Participation’)

THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Note: Give a description of how participants will be informed of the nature of the project and whether they will be given an information sheet. If no information sheet is given, it should be justified. The submission should include the information sheet.

To ensure the participants are suitably informed about their role in the research and how their data will be used, the consent form will include a concise and understandable description of the research, including the conceivable risks and benefits to them.

The consent form will also contain the researcher’s University contact information, allowing the subject to be able to contact the researcher after the researcher has left the interview/observation, should they want to ask further questions or want more information on the research.

As already stated, the subject will keep a copy of the consent form so they have the details readily available, should they need to contact the researcher.

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM

Note: Assessment of any possible harm that research may cause participants (e.g. psychological distress or repercussions of legal, political and economic nature). Any information sheet should clearly state any possible disadvantages participating in the study may have. You should also consider your own safety.

Assessment of possible harm can be considered in two sections; participant harm and researcher harm. The information sheet will clearly and understandably outline the risks to the participant, to help them make an informed decision on whether to participate. There are no *major* risks to participant or researcher.

Participant harm:

Potential of psychological harm

The topic of succession and intergenerational transfer is potentially emotive; farming families can have strong emotional attachments to the land, particularly when it has been passed down from generation to generation. The process of succession is widely understood as a time for potential conflict, difficulty and distress in the family farm for a number of reasons, for example, transferring the farm to an identified successor is likely to involve the principal farmer having to ‘give up’ his or her identity or perhaps the successor being coerced into taking on the farm. Succession is typically not discussed because it involves ‘facing up’ to the inevitability of difficult or distressing issues including retirement, incapacity or death of the principal farmer. Facing up to these issues and inevitabilities in an interview could prove distressing. The topic of succession is also a fairly ‘personal’ or ‘private’ topic and the idea of discussing this with an ‘outsider’ could also be stressful or feel intrusive. Succession could well be have been a source of contention within the farm family and the interview process may involve ‘revisiting’ the topic, which could

be painful or distressing for the subject(s). By using semi-structured interviews it is anticipated that the discussion will be quite extensive and detailed, this could amplify the difficulty for participants.

To prepare the respondents for these potential issues, the information sheet will clearly outline the nature of the topic and the extensive nature of the semi-structured interview and these potential impacts. The researcher will strive to demonstrate sensitivity during the interview, giving respondents time and freedom to answer questions, not forcing respondents to answer questions they may be finding difficult or distressing and reminding respondents of their right to withdraw from the research at any point if they are finding the interview difficult, with no negative implications for the respondent. In addition to this, to decrease the chances of psychological harm and to put the respondents at ease, the researcher will (aim to) arrange the interview(s) at the respondent's home. This will hopefully put the respondent at ease and will mean they are less likely to become stressed.

Interviews with principal farmers and (potential) successors, aimed to establish their attitudes and future behavioural intentions in the context of the food security agenda will be done separately and *all* associated data anonymised (see section below on anonymity). Interviewing principal farmers and their (potential) successors together could cause conflict between them during the interview, should the successor's intentions perhaps not align with that of the farmer's.

Potential of legal/political/economic harm

Interviewing principal farmers and their (potential) successors together could, if perhaps the (potential) successor expressed no desire to take on the farm or expressed their perhaps controversial plans for the farm upon managerial transfer to the dislike or disapproval of the principal farmer, this could have implications for the successor's current role on the farm, and could potentially impact on the succession of the farm to them, threatening their economic stability if they were reliant on farm income. Therefore, as already established, farmers and their (potential) successors will be interviewed separately and *all* associated data will be anonymised (see section below on anonymity).

Potential sources of physical harm

There are not thought to be any increased risks of physical harm to the research participants associated with this research.

Researcher harm:

The main safety consideration for the researcher is concerned with the solitary nature of the interview process. The researcher intends to visit family farm's homes, alone. The researcher intends to manage this risk by emailing/phoning/texting a colleague in the department before going out to do the interview with details of the interview or observation location and giving them an estimated return time. The researcher also intends to keep their mobile phone with them during the research process allowing them to contact the allocated colleague should they need to. Upon the researcher's return from the interview or observation, they will inform the allocated colleague of their safe return.

DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

Note: You should include i)an account of how the anonymity of the participants will be protected ii) how the security of the data will be guaranteed iii) if and how the material will be anonymised

iv) what will happen to the material at the end of the project (if retained advise where and how long for).

Data will be kept in accordance to Data Protection Act's (1998) eight core principles.

Anonymity of participants in interviews

Anonymity of participants poses a challenge in such a specific geographical locality and the researcher appreciates that you do not need to know much about somebody's life to work out who they are. A unique event or characteristic could easily make someone recognisable; this difficulty is amplified by working in a specific locality.

The anonymity of participants will be protected by removing direct identifiers from the data (such as names and addresses). Names will be replaced a suitable tag that typifies the person eg. male successor 1. Names and addresses will be kept within a password protected spread sheet and linked to the raw data, such as transcriptions, using the 'tag'. The farm name will also have an associated 'tag' eg. farm1. In a broader geographical study, the exact geographical location may be replaced with a meaningful descriptive term that typifies the location eg. Moorview Farm, but in such a specific geographical location these meaningful descriptions could jeopardise anonymity.

Anonymity of the farmer and successor...

As already stated above, because of the sensitivity of the issue and the sometimes profound emotional attachment to the land or occupation, farmers and successors will be interviewed separately. This anonymity will be maintained even when discussing farmer and associated successor's interview data to avoid potential psychological or economic harm. The use of the data in the following way will be avoided:

“I really want my son to take over the farm, we've been farming for several generations now and it would break my heart if he didn't keep our name on the land”, however, his successor, 'successor12' expressed a somewhat different opinion, claiming “I couldn't think of anything worse than farming, I want to get a job in the city, I'm just not cut out for farming” (Farmer 7)

By knowing what he said in their own interview, 'Farmer 7' would be able to identify 'successor12' as his son. So although the 'tags' have anonymised the respondents to a certain extent or to 'outsiders', this will need carefully managing. Instead, the following practice will be upheld, which will prevent the farmer knowing what their successor said, and vice versa, thus reducing potential harm:

One farmer was particularly keen for his son to take on the farm, yet his son expressed a somewhat different opinion, claiming:

“I couldn't think of anything worse than farming, I want to get a job in the city, I'm just not cut out for farming” (Potential Successor 12)

The specificity of Farmer 7's response has been reduced, so that he is unlikely to be able to link his interview data to that of his successors and thus identify what his successor said.

Although all details will be anonymised, the scale of the research, at the local level, will mean that even if details are reduced or changed, it may still be possible for others, who are familiar with the

area and its population to decipher who it refers to. The respondents will be made aware of the limitations of anonymity at this geographic level in the consent form.

Security of data

As suggested the names and addresses of participants and their associated 'tags', will be stored in a password protected spread sheet, on a password protected and encrypted computer, which only the researcher has access too. To ensure confidentiality throughout and beyond the research period, hardcopy data (e.g. field notes) will only contain the 'tag' as a means of ID (no names or addresses) and will be kept in a locked cabinet, which only the researcher has access to, in a restricted access office. Data will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed to access it.

What will happen to the data at the end of the project?

Respondents will be informed that data will be stored in line with the above conditions, indefinitely. This will be included on the information sheet.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Note: You should include i) an indication of how the participants are informed of any commercial or other interests involved in the project ii) who funds the research iii) how and for what purposes the results will be used iv) how and where the results will be published.

The interest of this research is purely academic and the results will be used for academic purposes only.

Participants will be informed the research is funded by the John Oldacre Foundation, a registered charity with the broad aim of providing financial support for the advancement or promotion, for public benefit of research in agricultural sciences and the publication of useful results.

It is intended for the results to be published for academic purposes and disseminated at academic conferences/seminars. Participants will be able to access said publications and enquire as to the progress and outcomes of the research using the contact details offered on both the consent form and information sheet.

USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Note: Include an indication of whether and how the participants and users of the research will be consulted when designing, executing and reporting on the study. The submission should state, for example, if participants are given the opportunity to review their own interview transcript and omit statements at this stage.

A pilot interview will be used, which will test the interview questions and give pilot respondents the opportunity to give feedback on their interview experience, i.e. did the questions make sense?

Interview transcripts will be made available to the participant *on their request*. The researcher's University contact details will be readily available on the consent form and information sheet. On their request, the respondent can review their transcript and omit statements.

Respondents will be able to enquire about the progress/outcomes of the research and where they can find any associated publications using the contact details provided on the consent form and information sheet.

Interview Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Rising to the Food Security Challenge: An Investigation into Family Farm Succession in the South West of England

What is the research about?	As food security has (re)emerged at the forefront of the political agenda, this research intends to explore the linkages between the succession process and the delivery of food security policy. The proposed research aims to understand (i) the potential importance of the succession process in shaping the delivery of the food security agenda and (ii) the impact of the impending food security agenda on farmers' and successors' attitudes and behavioural intentions, set within locality of Hatherleigh and surrounding parishes. The research places a particular emphasis on the role of 'the successor'.
Who am I?	My name is Hannah Chiswell, I am a PhD researcher based at the Centre for Rural Policy Research, at Exeter University.
Who is funding the research?	The research is funded by the John Oldacre Foundation, a registered charity with the aim of providing financial support for the advancement or promotion, for public benefit of research in agricultural sciences and the publication of useful results.
What will the data be used for?	The interest of this research is purely academic and the results will be used for academic purposes only.

Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview or observation data, please contact: Hannah Chiswell, Centre for Rural Policy Research, Room 340, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter University, Devon, UK, EX4 4QJ

Phone: 07795566639

Email: H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Professor Michael Winter: D.M.Winter@exeter.ac.uk or Dr Matt Lobley: M.Lobley@exeter.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of *your* interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below). Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act, which means data will be anonymised and kept securely, indefinitely.

Anonymity

Interview and observation data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of names or addresses. You and your farm will be referred to using a random 'tag' e.g. 'farmer1'. It is important to be aware however, that the research focus on the local area could mean a unique event or characteristic could make you recognisable to others who know the area well; although data will be reduced or changed to conceal your identity.

Advice to participants

Participants need to be aware that the interviews will be focusing on the topic of farm succession; a topic that the researcher is aware is an important and potentially emotive topic that some respondents may find difficult to discuss. Please be assured that all answers are confidential and will be anonymised. You are reminded that you can withdraw from the research at any time without any detriment to you.

Consent

☐

By ticking this box, I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I understand I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the researcher using the above details, at no detriment to myself.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Your Contact Details

Note your contact details are kept **separately** from your interview data

Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Phone number:	

NOTE 2 COPIES TO BE SIGNED, ONE KEPT BY INTERVIEWEE AND THE OTHER, THE RESEARCHER

Appendix 11 Certificate of ethical approval



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Amory Building
Rennes Drive
Exeter UK EX4 4RJ
www.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Politics (Centre for Rural Policy Research)

Title of Project: Rising to the Food Security Challenge: An Investigation into the Impact of the Food Security Agenda on Farmers and their Successors in the South West of England.

Name(s)/Title of Project Research Team Member(s): Hannah Chiswell

Project Contact Point: hmc206@exeter.ac.uk

This project has been approved for the period

From: 01.09.12

To: 30.09.13

College Ethics Committee approval reference: 20.06.12-6

Signature.......... Date approved: 28.08.12
(Lise Storm – Chair SSIS College Ethics Committee)

Appendix 12 Emergent coding frameworks and node classifications (exported from NVivo 10 project)

Please note, not all of the following nodes ended up as themes in the thesis analysis, i.e. the emergent coding framework a ‘perfect’ representation of the eventual analysis. However, the nodes developed in the project are all shown here to indicate how the analysis evolved.

Farmer: nodes

Current economic situation
Not good
Costs
Evidence to support succession crisis
Weather
OK
Because of personal sacrifice
Reliant on other sources of income

Farmer succession
Entry route
Day release
Returned after school
Returned after University
Returned before finishing school
Farmer identification
Eldest son
Younger son
Learning
All aspects
Learnt all from father
Learnt very little before take over
Separate unit
Primogeniture (reasons for)
Chosen for viability of the farm
Eldest was more active on the farm
Insists nothing to do with tradition
‘Just happened’
Other siblings not interested
Sister(s) not interested
Unfair
Was always the way
Women don’t farm (!)
Succession planning
Yes
No
Take over
Gradual
Unproblematic
Problems
Farmer past retirement age
Farmer reluctance to delegate
Transfer time
After death
After retirement
Farmer ill-health
FMD
When successor got married

Farmer motivations for succession
Bred into animals
Challenge
Conservation
Contribute to community
Crops or growing
Didn't know any different
Easy option
Expectation
Flexible
In blood
Lifestyle
Livestock
Machinery
Necessity
Not family
Not money
Outside
Own boss
Respect previous generations' work
Unexplainable
Who you are
Pressure experienced?
No pressure experienced
Pressure experienced

Food security
Able to support definition with figures
Complex
Food vs fuel
Increasing population
More people to feed
Not relying on imports
Nutrition transition
Of little national concern
Political unrest
Producing enough food
Refute concept
Scale
Global concern
National concern
Self-sufficiency
Sustainability
Unsure

Future of farming
Positive
General changing image of farming
Increased demand
Allow farmers to be producers
Encourage successors
Farmers valued as producers
Increased value of and interest in food
Negative
Concerns with agro-food context
Nothing will happen until government emphasise production
Public don't appreciate real farming
Renaissance as OTT

Importance of successor identification
If they can make a living
If they want to
Important
Immortality
Keep family line going
Kept farmer on land
Linked to time on land
Part of the family
Ultimate purpose of farming
Not important
Linked to (lack of) time on land

Succession effect
Because of successor interest
Change stock type
Comply with legislation
Encourage new equipment
General progressiveness
House improvements
Increasing stocking levels
Influenced by their education/courses etc.
Keep tidy
Kept up as opposed to stopped
Purchased land

Succession status
Could have been daughter
Identified
Daughter
Grandson
Son
Ruled out
Skip generation
Too early
Unsure

Potential successors: nodes

Future of farming
Food security agenda
Improved public perception
Suspicious/false image
Positive
Compared to FMD/depression etc.
Understanding of farming as a proper career
Unsure/reluctant to say
Negative
Positive

Motivations for farming
Emotional attachment to farm
Enjoyment of farming
Family reasons
Respect previous generations' work
Farming as a decision
Intrinsic
Influence of food security agenda
Secondary consideration
Motivated by potential financial reward
Satisfy financial requirements
Satisfy lifestyle requirements
Just happened
Time on land

Transfer of managerial control <i>(includes farmer narratives)</i>
Challenging farmer
Evidence of succession planning
Existence of a ladder
Farmer corroborates PS points
Farmer in charge of books
Farmer keen to retire
Farmer reluctance to delegate
Farmer unwilling to plan for succession
Farmer unwillingness to retire
Felt valued/listened to/involved
Frustration with transfer
Genuine involvement in farm
Good grasp of finances
Inclusion in finances etc.
Involvement in buying and selling
PS unwilling to challenge farmer
Widely involved

Understanding of food security
Correct
Basic
Complex/multidimensional
Food safety/traceability
Reliance on imports
Scale
National
International
Self-sufficiency
Sustainability

The following **attributes** were given to potential successors' transcripts. This allowed nodes (or more specifically text coded to each node) to be grouped according to these attributes, specifically using a series of *Advanced Coding Queries* and *Matrix Coding Queries*. Emerging patterns formed a significant part of initial data analysis, showing broad patterns in ways of thinking and attitudes according to these characteristics. Arguments and conclusions were developed using these patterns as a starting point.

Farmer	
<i>Node Classifications</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Gender	Male; Female
Age	18-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 61-70; 71-80; 81-90; 91+
Entry path	(1) Established Family; (2) Newly Established Family Farm - Attachment to Area and Occupation; (3) Newly Established Family Farm - Attachment to Occupation; (4) New Entrant
Succession status	Confident; Maybe; No
Generation on farm	2 nd ; 3 rd ; 4 th ; 5 th ; 6 th +
Highest level of qualification	School leaver; FE; HE/post-grad
AgEd	Yes; No
Eldest child	Yes; No

Potential Successor	
<i>Node Classifications</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Gender	Male; Female
Age	18-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 60+
Succession status	Confident; Maybe; No
Generation on farm	2 nd ; 3 rd ; 4 th ; 5 th ; 6 th +
Highest level of qualification	School leaver; FE; HE/post-grad
AgEd	Yes; No
Eldest child	Yes; No

Appendix 13 Thematic analysis: final themes

Farmer themes and subthemes

- **Farmer entry**
 - Established family farms
 - Newly established family farms
 - Entirely new entrants
- **Farmer motivations**
 - Primogeniture
 - Socialisation
 - Role of farm work
 - Role of tradition/family
 - Intrinsic motivations
- **Food security**
 - Understanding
 - Correct
 - Basic
 - Safety/traceability
 - Complex
 - Renaissance as an opportunity?
 - Yes (positive)
 - Good opportunity for potential successors
 - Demand for food
 - ‘Get farmers producing again’
 - No (negative)
 - Agro-food context problematic
- **Succession status**
 - Confident
 - Realistically hopeful
 - Ruled out
 - Too young
 - Daughters now eligible
- **Desirability of succession**
 - Important *and* desirable
 - Linked to food security agenda
- **Succession effect**
 - Purchase land
 - Change stock
 - Purchase more stock
 - Machinery
- **Successor effect**
- **(Current) transfer of managerial control**
 - Conservative
 - Farmer unwillingness to retire
 - Farmer unwillingness to delegate
 - Progressive
 - Influence of wider societal changes

Potential successor themes and subthemes

- **Succession status**
 - Confident
 - Realistic possibility
 - Too young/undecided
- **Impact of reflexive modernization**
 - Choice
 - Short-term diversions
- **Potential successor motivations**
 - Influence of wider societal changes
 - Farming as a decision
 - Qualitative evaluation
 - Intrinsic motivations
 - Traditional motivations
- **Food security**
 - Understanding
 - Correct
 - Basic
 - Safety/traceability
 - Complex
 - Renaissance as an opportunity?
 - Yes (positive)
 - Demand for food
 - ‘Get farmers producing again’
 - Public perception
 - Valued
 - ‘Proper career’
 - No (negative)
 - False perception
 - Agro-food context problematic
- **Transfer of managerial control**
 - Conservative
 - Potential successor frustrated
 - Ladder of increasing responsibility
 - Finances remain at top
 - Farmer unwillingness to delegate/plan for retirement/retire
 - Progressive
 - Influence of wider societal changes
 - Short-term diversion
 - Delegation as a tactic
 - Involvement in higher rung tasks
 - Genuine involvement

Appendix 14 Farm and farmer pen portraits

Table 11.1

Farm and farmer pen portraits

Farm	Farm Description	Farmer	Description
Farm 1	Farm 1 is a 200 acre sheep farm. The farm has recently moved out of beef due to recurring TB.	Farmer 1	Farmer 1 is in his early seventies and has been involved in farming since he was evacuated to a farm during WWII. Farmer 1 purchased Farm 1 in the 1960s and is the first generation of his family on the farm and no previous familial connection to farming.
Farm 2	Farm 2 is a 220 acre beef and sheep farm, with a small amount of cereal grown for use on the farm.	Farmer 2	Farmer 2 is in his late fifties and has been farming Farm 2 since leaving his (adjoining) home farm, in the late 1970s. Although Farmer 2 is the first generation of on Farm 2, his family have been farming the adjoining farm for three generations.
Farm 3	Farm 3 is a 120 acre organic beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 3	Farmer 3 is in his late seventies and has been farming Farm 3 since his father bought the farm in the late 1950s. He is the second generation of his family on Farm 3.
Farm 4	Farm 4 is 250 acre mixed farm.	Farmer 4	Farmer 4 is in his late sixties and has been farming Farm 4, since returning from school in the late 1950s. Farmer is the third generation of his family to be farming on Farm 4.
Farm 5	Farm 5 is a 100 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 5	Farmer 5 is 80 years old and has been farming Farm 5 since returning from school in the late 1940s. Farmer 5 is the third generation of his family to be farming on Farm 5.
Farm 6	Farm 6 is a 200 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 6	Farmer 6 is in his mid-50s and has been farming Farm 6 since leaving his (nearby) home farm, in the early 1990s. Farmer 6 is the first generation of his family to be farming on Farm 6, although his family have been farming in the adjoining parish for several generations.
Farm 7	Farm 7 is a 90 acre beef farm.	-	<i>Farmer not interviewed</i>
Farm 8	Farm 8 is a 200 acre dairy farm.	-	<i>Farmer not interviewed</i>
Farm 9	Farm 9 is a 270 acre sheep and beef farm.	Farmer 9	Farmer 9 is in his mid-eighties returned to the farm in his early teens. He is the fourth generation of his family to be farming Farm 9.
Farm 10	Farm 10 is a 100 acre dairy farm.	Farmer 10	Farmer 10 is in his fifties and purchased and moved to Farm 10 in the 1970s. He is the first generation of his family to be farming Farm 10, although his family (and wider family) have been involved in farming, elsewhere for many generations.
Farm 11	Farm 11 is an 80 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 11	Farmer 11 is in his early 50s, although employed as a farm worker elsewhere he only returned to the Farm 11 (the family farm) fairly recently when his parents' health deteriorated. Farmer 11 is the second generation of his family to be farming Farm 11.

Table 11.1

Farm and farmer pen portraits

Farm	Farm Description	Farmer	Description
Farm 12	Farm 12 is a 450 beef, sheep and arable farm.	Farmer 12	Farmer 12 is in his late 50s. He has been farming Farm 12 since returning from school in the early 1970s. He is the fourth generation of his family to be farming Farm 12.
Farm 13	Farm 13 is a 220 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 13	Farmer 13 is in his late fifties and returned to the farm straight from school in the 1970s. He is the third generation of his family to be farming Farm 13.
Farm 14	Farm 14 is a 140 acre arable farm, producing food for a neighbouring dairy farm.	Farmer 14	Farmer 14 is in his mid-sixties and moved from his (adjoining) home farm, to Farm 14 in the early 1990s. Although Farmer 14 is the first generation of his family on Farm 14, his family have been farming an adjoining farm for several generations.
Farm 15	Previously entirely dairy, Farm 15 is now a 175 acre mixed farm.	Farmer 15	Farmer 15 is in his mid-forties, who returned to the farm after leaving school in the early 1980s. He is the fourth generation of his family on Farm 15.
Farm 16	Farm 16 is a 350 acre mixed farm, including beef, pigs, turkeys and corn, as well as haylage and grass. The farmer described the farm as 'unusually mixed'.	Farmer 16	Farmer 16 is in his early fifties, and has been farming Farm 16 since returning from University and a gap year in the mid-1980s. He farmed alongside his father and brother until his father died in the 1990s. His younger brother later left, having purchased a nearby farm in the late 1990s. Farmer 16 is the third generation of his family to be farming Farm 16, although the family were farming elsewhere in the parish for several generations before their arrival at Farm 16.
Farm 17	Farm 17 is a 190 acre beef and cereal farm, and some thatching straw.	Farmer 17	Farmer 17 is in his late forties. He returned to the farm immediately after leaving school in the early 1980s although he left working full-time on the farm for around 10 years, before returning to the farm in the early 2000s. He took over the farm in the late 2000s. He is the fourth generation of his family on the farm.
Farm 18	Farm 18 is a 200 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 18	Farmer 18 is in his late sixties and has been farming Farm 18 since he left school in the 1960s. He is the fourth generation of his family on Farm 18.
Farm 19	Farm 19 is a 400 acre dairy farm.	Farmer 19	Farmer 19 is in his sixties and has been farming at Farm 19 since returning from school. He is the third generation of his family to be farming Farm 19.
Farm 20	Farm 20 is a 600 acre sheep and beef farm.	Farmer 20	Farmer 20 is in his late forties. He returned to the farm immediately after leaving school in the early 1980s and is the second generation of his family on the farm.
Farm 21	Previously dairy, Farm 21 is now a 190 acre sheep and beef farm.	Farmer 21	Farmer 21 is in his late fifties and returned to the farm from school in the early 1970s. He is the fourth generation of his family to be farming Farm 21.
Farm 22	Farm 22 is a 60 acre mixed farm, mainly including suckler cows and wheat reed for thatching.	Farmer 22	Farmer 22 is in her mid-sixties. She purchased the farm with her husband in the early 1990s. Neither of them had any familial connection to farming and they bought the farm as a new venture. They are the first generation of their respective families on Farm 22.

Table 11.1

Farm and farmer pen portraits

Farm	Farm Description	Farmer	Description
Farm 23	Farm 23 is a 350 acre dairy farm, with some beef farming.	Farmer 23	Farmer 23 is in his mid-forties and purchased the farm in 2011. Although he is the first generation of his family at Farm 23, his family (and extended family) have been farming elsewhere for 9 generations.
Farm 24	Farm 24 is a 190 acre livestock farm.	Farmer 24	Farmer 24 is in his late sixties. He returned to the farm in the early 1960s and worked alongside his father until his death in the late 1970s. The farm had been in his family since the 1860s .
Farm 25	Farm 25 is a 400 acre dairy farm.	Farmer 25	Farmer 25 is in his early forties and had been farming alongside his father on their nearby home farm since returning from school. Originally owned by Farmer 25's great-Grandparents, Farmer 25's parents formally inherited the farm in the early 1990s. Farmer 25 began farming Farm 25 later in the early 1990s and he is the fourth generation of his family to farm there.
Farm 26	Farm 26 is a 200 acre beef and sheep farm.	Farmer 26	Farmer 26 is in his mid-60s and has been farming Farm 26 since leaving his (nearby) home farm, in the early 1980s. Although Farmer 26 is the first generation of his family to be farming Farm 26, his family have been farming in the research area for three generations.
Farm 27	Farm 27 is a 150 acre dairy farm.	Farmer 27 ²⁴	Farmer 27 in his mid-sixties purchased the farm in the mid-1960s. Although Farmer 27 is the first generation of his family to be farming Farm 27, his family had a strong association with farming locally.
Farm 28	Farm 28 is a 600 acre organic livestock farm, with some cereal production.	Farmer 28	Farmer 28 is in his late seventies. He returned to the farm in the 1950s after undertaking an agricultural degree. Farmer 28 is the third generation of his family to be farming Farm 28; his grandfather had been farming there since the late 1800s.
Farm 29	Farm 29 is 21 acres. Although the farm has some livestock, Farmer 29 describes the farm as neither 'traditional crop nor livestock based'. It has a strong emphasis on environmental management and diversification.	Farmer 29	Farmer 29 is in her early forties and purchased Farm 29 only six years prior to this research. Having originally trained as a scientist and worked in overseas conservation management, she and her husband had no previous familial connection to farming and are the first generation of their family on Farm 29.

²⁴ Unfortunately, Farmer 27 was only present at the start of the interview and the rest of the interview was conducted with his wife. Having been actively involved in the farm and from a farming background herself, Farmer 27's wife was well placed to talk about many (although not all) of the desired topics, particularly surrounding food security and perceptions of the industry. For this reason, the decision was made to include the interview in this analysis. Furthermore, the unforeseen unavailability of Farmer 27 brings with it a sense of authenticity and reflects the practicalities of farm-based research, where, although the location of the interview was typically associated with a range of benefits (see Section 5.5.4), it can, as in this case, also be a source of distraction or even failure. Quotes from Farmer 27's wife are clearly labelled as such throughout.

Appendix 15 Publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (2014) 'The Importance of Next Generation Farmers: A Conceptual Framework to Bring the Potential Successor into Focus', *Geography Compass*, 8 (5): 300-312

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Appendix 16 Publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (in press) 'The value of the 1941-1943 National Farm Survey as a method for engagement with farmers in contemporary research', *Area*, n/a: n/a

This document has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons, but is available here: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/area.12136/abstract>

Appendix 17 Publication: CHISWELL, H.M. (2013) 'Cultivating narratives: cultivating successors — a reply to Steiger *et al.*'. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 3(2): 25-28

This document has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons, but is available here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2013.032.016>

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